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THEOPNEUSTON

OR

SELECT SCRIPTURES CONSIDERED

THEOPNEUSTON

OR

SELECT SCRIPTURES CONSIDERED

BY

SAMUEL HANSON COX, D. D.
Pastor of the First Presbyterian church, Brooklyn, N. Y.

ADAPTED TO BE USEFUL TO BIBLE CLASSES, SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHERS, AND OTHER CAREFUL READERS OF THE WORD OF GOD.

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1872
CITY OF WASHINGTON

Understandest thou what thou readest?
And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?

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TO THE

HON. JOSEPH COURTEN HORNBLOWER, LL.D.

CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE STATE OF NEW-JERSEY, AND RULING ELDER IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWARK, N. J.

HONORED AND DEAR SIR—You will brook the liberty here taken with your name, I think, in honor properly less of a friendship now of more than thirty years standing—from my first acquaintance with you and respect for you, than of a spiritual relation, that crowns all others, which is exactly—as I count—thirty years old the present autumn; especially when the motive is known and appreciated, by which I am influenced, in the inscription of this little volume to my countrymen, through you, their proper and honored representative.

You shall not be offended or alienated, be sure of it, by any thing like flattery, or the

remotest approach to that style of adulation, that is less at home in our country, it may be, than in the older hemisphere; and that is not more revolting to the Christian, than obnoxious to correct taste, ordinarily censurable on the score of sincerity, incongruous to the simplicity of a republican, frequently verging from the affected sublime to the purely ridiculous, and really impeachable on the sober ground of courteous respect; since it is a specimen of grossness and bad manners, to tell a person directly and at large all the good or fine things, even if they are true, which might be said, and are possibly well said, by his friends, in his favor.

If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, however, in rightly estimating those things of God, which it is our present design to unfold, and which are supremely excellent, it is not amiss that this appeal is made to one whose probity and intelligence, whose impartial love of the truth and catholic Christian piety, are the mature and the appropriate qualifications which an author might select or prefer, in making that appeal, in behalf of his work, where the matter and the

motive, as distinguished from the manner and the style, are the whole of its pretension to public countenance and support.

As to its name or title, since a name is that by which any person or thing is known, it ought to be designating, distinctive, peculiar. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God;* a proposition among the most signal and momentous ever couched in human language! Eight words express it in the translation, three in the original; and the last word there we have appropriated—THEOPNEUSTON—in the neuter form, as the name of our little volume. The chief reason is—that it proposes to be conversant with divine inspiration, as the soul of its body and the vitality of its being; while it answers all the ends of a name and is perhaps wholly unappropriated. The THEOPNEUSTY that has lately appeared, from an author in Geneva and a translator in Boston, both known and loved by the present writer, is not precisely the same word; while the work it entitles, however allied it may be and however superior, is widely dissimilar; and our name was adopted and fixed before we heard of the

other, its etymological twin-brother or rather identity. But as it is a foreigner and one of the ancients, it is illustrated also in the title; as,

THEOPNEUSTON,
OR
SELECT SCRIPTURES CONSIDERED.

The motto needs no explanation. Its history is found in Acts, 8 : 30, 31, and from verse 26 to 40. And should this publication find favor with general readers, and the writer's life be spared, he hopes to work in the same vocation more profitably hereafter; since there is almost no end to important passages, some of them grandly important and full of interest, to be selected and examined, in a similar way and given to the reading community.

As a mode of communicating religious instruction to the public, it is rather peculiar, if not original or new. Sermons are little read, and booksellers consider them as not marketable. A worldling thinks of going to sleep as soon as he hears the word—sermon. Commentaries are considered voluminous, plethoric, and fitter for students than general read-

ers. And didactic discussions, not to say those of a polemical tendency, are little appreciated, even where they are at all endured: while the light trash of the ephemeral press, its romance, its folly, its falsehood, its attraction, and its poison, seem to require many an effort to counteract its influence. Nor will it answer to be supine and do nothing, because we can neither do all things, nor such things as we cannot but desire, as less below our own standard of achievement. We can make some attempt. No EFFORT WAS EVER LOST, said Milton; and it took Milton to say such a thing. Yes! in working for Christ, every stroke is victory, every battle triumph.

It has been our aim to be various and entertaining, as well as faithful and useful; to make something rather readable, rather AMERICAN, as well as instructive, edifying, Christian.

> Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,

said Horace, two thousands years ago;

> He every point achieves, who with the sweet
> Mingles the useful, making both complete.

This however, is an excellence which very

few ever exemplify; and we can be pardoned for aiming so high, much more easily than for coming so far short of the mark. There is nothing like the Holy Scriptures for study, for profit, for excellence, and for delight.

The work is adapted, less in form, than in substance, to be useful to Bible Classes, Sabbath School Teachers, and other careful readers of the word of God? If it inspires the habit of thinking, as well as reading, and makes the latter at all subservient to the former, in the study of the Scriptures, our effort will not be lost. How important is it to learn to think! How few ever make the attainment! How paltry is reading without thinking! It seems necessary to think, if it is to love; since it were strange indeed, if we love Christ, and yet grudge to think of him. What some professors of Christianity lose, by not habituating this duty, it is impossible for us fully to estimate. Even if they lose not their souls, yet is their damage great and wasting. They lose light, comfort, strength, joy, stability, growth, symmetry of character, usefulness, and ripeness for heaven. And Christ loses by them that declarative glory to

which he has so good and so imperative a claim.

The selections, II. VI. IX. are specially important as corrections of popular mistakes, in which many a theologian of eminence has ingloriously participated. If the publication shall have the effect, proximately or remotely, to diffuse a juster sense of the true and proper meaning of these shamefully abused scriptures; if thus the public sentiment of Christians may be started in a right channel respecting them; and if the general habit may be at all assisted in this way of profitable and correct thinking, and even of studying into the native sense of scripture; it will have accomplished something desirable; it will have done service to the cause supreme of God and man; it will have fulfilled—we are sure—a useful, though humble, mission in the world. If we all knew the golden profits of mining among these original stratifications of truth, these primitive treasures of God, we should have less time and temper for wrangling theologically, and we should practically despise the prolific isms of human wisdom and audacity.

We might well say to the irreligious, with Dr. Young,

Retire and read thy Bible to be gay,
There truths abound of sovereign aid to peace.
Ah! do not prize them less because inspired,
As thou and thine are fond and proud to do.
If not inspired, that pondrous page had stood
Time's treasure and the wonder of the wise.
* * * * * *
A page where triumphs immortality,
Which not the whole creation could produce;
Which not the conflagration shall destroy.
In nature's ruins not one letter lost.
'Tis printed —— in the mind of God forever.
* * * * * *
'Tis immortality unriddles man.
'Tis immorality illustrates God.
'Tis immortality illumines all.
* * * * * *
'Tis this makes joy a duty to the wise,
'Tis this makes Christian triumph a command,
'Tis impious in a good man to be sad!

The Holy Scriptures are able to make thee WISE UNTO SALVATION, *through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* 2 Tim. 3 : 15.

As to that imperial, pragmatical, inexorable class of readers called critics, I may say in truth that I have had little respect for them or care about them, in writing these sheets.

They will very probably discover, by their sagacity, that the style is quite 'peculiar,' and the whole thing remarkably 'characteristic;' and then they may—not graciously, since it is all justice, not grace, that makes their professional element, but—gracefully, perchance, oblige the public, by communicating to the less gifted, *ne sons absolvatur*, the remarkable discovery. Some of them can easily tear to pieces what others have made; since it is so much easier to pull down than to build, to censure than perform: even as a great man remarks, that 'a savage can destroy a palace, who could not construct a hovel.' But to others, I cast myself on their clemency and even their commiseration. Did they know the multitude of cares and distractions, through which I have threaded my way as in a wildering labyrinth; often an inch at a time, and with ceaseless and unmitigable interruptions, breaking the threads of thought and the clews of guidance; knew they the headaches, or, the heart-aches, or the manifold discouragements and trials, as well as wonderful mercies, through which, *faint, yet pursuing*, I have finished it in a sort at last; and

understood they the great difference, in my own mind, between the matter or the substance, and the manner or the style and the trappings of its appearance; and felt they how much and humbly I would intreat them, to give my BIBLIARIDION,* needing it so much, a little of that mercy which they so piously and copiously award to the style and the manner of the Bible of God itself: perhaps their opportune clemency would so qualify their minds for the perusal, as to insure much more profit, and even pleasure, from the task, than could in any other way accrue. I wish its style were incomparably better; but such as it is—may the wise make the best of it!

> "Let those teach others who themselves excel,
> And censure freely who have written well."

Besides, every man, amid *gifts differing*, seems to have *his own proper gift of God* for edification. He must then be himself, do as well as he can, and rejoice in all those who can do better. I only add in this connection, that the service here attempted is of very great weight and importance to the churches. To understand the Scriptures will unite us all,

* Little Book.

or nothing ever will. God will give us no new revelation; nor will he change his old one, till the end of time or the end of eternity. The Bible now contains, in its perfect canon, all the light that will ever be given to the world. No doubt it will be better understood, more diffused, and more enjoyed, especially as hermeneutical science advances, as times and seasons roll, and as providence fulfils prophecy. But all is only the expansion, the development, and the illustration, of what we have already in the wonderful and blessed Bible. Hence every sober and honest attempt to show its pure meaning, and to *teach men so*, deserves favor from the wise. Its whole contents are one; one tree, with a thousand branches; one body, with many parts, members, and organs; one complicate but perfectly harmonious system, evincing *the unity of the Spirit*. It is called by way of justest eminence, the Book, the Bible. Thus, though it contains sixty-six books, thirty-nine of the Old and twenty-seven of the New Testament; though written and furnished by between forty and fifty inspired men, the amanuenses of the Holy Ghost;

and though its writers lived through a space of more than one thousand five hundred years, and inhabited different countries, as Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, Asia Minor, and other parts of the Great Roman Empire, at their times of writing; yet are they all servants of one master, all tributary to one cause, all have one theme, all have one Inspirer, one object, one design, one hope, one reward, one home!

It is my honest opinion, sir, that, for the reasons above stated, should the substance of this publication be at all useful, in its desired subserviency to the elucidation of the truth of God, as revealed to men in the Holy Scriptures, it will receive your cordial approbation, mingled with a kind and a generous estimate of its imperfections; and also that, should it be so fortunate as to conciliate your own, it may be cheered on its way, probably, by the smiles, if not the plaudits, of others.

No more of that. But before closing this address to yourself, I beg leave to seize an opportunity, long desired, and not soon found again were this left to pass unimproved, of giving to the world in a more authentic form,

an anecdote of some importance—as late events have shown—which has already appeared with good results, though defectively prepared and heralded, before the public. And I know of few others, dear sir, to whom, on the score of just and liberal appreciation, I could with equal propriety address it; or who, in reference to its received authenticity or its due circulation and influence, might relatively better vouch to the public for its validity, its sound historical truth.

Mankind at large, by a law of their being and their social relations, are affected with the power of examples, as well as of names, precedents, and usages, to an extent not often adequately computed by divines or philosophers. "Names are things," said a practically wise man. A great poet has said indeed, that

> A rose by any other name would smell as sweet:

but, for one, I question it. Our associations with the name, ROSE, are delightful. They are fragrant and odoriferous in our raptured imaginations, when the mere word is mentioned in English or Latin, and before that

glory of the flower-garden, white, red, or various, is substantially presented to regale the senses with its delicate beauty and its richly effluent perfume. Hence a great and loved example is credited in advance for every associated virtue. We readily believe what is good of his name or history, and we love goodness the more for every illustration it receives from him. On the other hand, if impiety is ascertained of such a personage, it either specially shocks us, or—we "first endure, then pity, then embrace" it, for his sake. Such an example can commend Christianity, if its agent were a Christian; and he can perhaps more promote infidelity, if he were ascertained or believed to be an infidel. Great are the obligations of distinguished men to be good, and to exemplify goodness before others!

How pre-eminently do these principles apply to the name of WASHINGTON! His unparalleled career of honor and applause, had he been like our third President, *proh! dedecus patriæ!** an infidel, would have entailed on this nation and all coming ages, a propor-

* Alas! for the glory of the country!

tionate moral curse, more pestiferous than his services were splendid and his actions useful; gigantic as his fame, and indelible as the history of his public achievements. No other man could have injured us in that way so much, or so irreparably. He was a man of his own class, and infidels have been anxious to claim him as their own. But they have signally failed in this, as their interests and their efforts will soon be all and eternally bankrupt together. They now despair of the attempt. To charge WASHINGTON with infidelity is an affront to the truth of history, and the nation will not endure it. It is a kind of impiety and treason, as well as ingratitude, which all men instinctively resent and deny. This they have often done, and on one modern occasion, it seems, they did, even in a theatre, when an impudent foreigner and atheist ventured to claim him; denouncing the outrage with one prolonged and unanimous outburst of merited indignation. And any fact which illustrates his piety, or in any way redeems his fame from the calumny, is welcomed by the public sentiment of the country as a part of the common treasure of mankind.

The truth is, WASHINGTON was not only a believer in the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, but a professor of the faith and a communicant in the church of God. This fact will have its weight on the right side of the great argument and be quoted with increasing cogency by unborn generations. That it is a fact is well attested by many authentic traditionary fragments; but these, for some reason, have been omitted or slighted too generally in all the graver compilations of his biography.* But they must sleep in forgetfulness no longer. We owe it to our nation and to mankind, we owe it to the purity and the justice of his own unequaled fame, to record these facts, that exhibit the graver excellences of his character, and to emblazon them, *decus et tutamen*, in alto-relievo, on the most enduring monuments of our country's greatness.

Called a few years since, by the late Dr. Hosack, when preparing his valuable memoir of Clinton, to contribute a paper for his work, in reference to the position and influence of

* The late work of Dr. Sparks, which I have since read, is a happy exception.

that distinguished patriot as President of the Presbyterian Education Society, I complied; and in its performance, influenced by sentiments such as I have endeavored above to portray, I found place for the anecdote, to which I have in all this a current allusion, and which will be considered interesting even by the general reader. Since it has appeared, it has been quoted, used, rehearsed by many, valued by the good, and gratuitously questioned, I find, by some of another description. I have subsequently regretted several things concerning it, such as the following: 1. That I did not assign to it a more conspicuous and honorable place, than that of a note, or suffix merely, to the text of the communication; which it would have graced, and adorned, had it been therein incorporated; as, with little care or address, it might easily and well have been. I regretted too 2. That I had not given my authority for the narrative; since this was requisite to stamp its credibility, as a fact, in the enlightened conviction of all readers. This I fully purposed to do, in some supplemental way; especially by writing to my venerable inform-

ant, and procuring from his own hand a full and minute account of the matter, which, when published, would put the question beyond all doubt, and establish the fact for ever. And here my regret rises to lamentation; since: 3. by delay, unintentional but stealthy in its progress, and at the very time when I was about to perform what I had so improperly delayed, I was precluded by the death of the late Reverend Asa Hillyer, D. D. of Orange, N. J. It was from the lips of this excellent person, with whom you, dear sir, were, as well as myself, long and well acquainted, that I received the narrative; as he received it, he said, from the lips of the worthy minister of Christ, who officiated on the occasion, the Reverend Timothy Johns, D. D. of Morristown, New Jersey.

Dr. Hillyer related the fact in a very interesting and impressive manner, and to a number of clergymen and others, as we were dining together in the city of New York, at the hospitable board of Anson G. Phelps, Esq. on the day of the anniversary of the American Bible Society, in May, of the year (I think) 1827. Dr. Hillyer was well ac-

quainted with Dr. Johns, as his next neighbor; their parishes being conterminous and their intimacy great. These facts considered will, I think, establish the anecdote as authentic history; although I scarcely the less lament that the public are not assured of it, in a written form from the pen of Dr. Hillyer himself.

But as the fact is worth corroborating, I wrote to my friend, JOHN B. JOHNS, M. D. of Morristown, grandson of the Rev. Dr. Johns; and have from him received the most satisfactory attestations. He says, "I believe there is no doubt of the truth of the fact. But there is now no living evidence. I remember to have heard Mr. William Johns, the son of the said Reverend clergyman, say, 'I heard General Washington make the request, and inquire as to the propriety of his taking the sacrament, and I saw him take it.' The widow of Mr. William Johns informed me, within a few days, that she heard her husband say, he saw him take the sacrament, at the time to which you refer."

This must have occurred "during the win-

ter of 1779–80, while the army was in winter-quarters in Morristown."

"While on the subject, it may be interesting to you for me to state that a lady, by the name of Mrs. Child,* widow of Francis Child, Esq. who printed the first daily paper in the city of New York, very respectable and well known by many of the old and influential citizens of New York, such as Chancellor Kent, Robert Lenox, Esq. and others, told me that she saw General Washington take the sacrament in Trinity Church, and that she sat in the next pew behind him at the time; which must have been when Washington resided in the city of New York, as President of the United States."

In a subsequent letter, Dr. Johns, referring to the note in Hosack's Memoir of Clinton, says, "I have read it to the widow of the late Mr. William Johns, and she says,' it is as perfect as she can make it, and is correct, as far as she can recollect of her husband's conversation.'

"One fact only she added; which was that

* Personally and well known to myself also, as pastor of her daughters.—S. H. C.

the General requested Dr. Johns to have a longer intermission between his morning and afternoon services, that his officers might attend, since the second service interfered with their dinner hour. So it was changed, and the officers attended both services."

Dr. Johns began his ministry at Morristown, Aug. 13, 1742. He was ordained and installed their pastor, Feb. 6, 1743, and entered into rest, in September, 1794; having served his people in the gospel more than half a century. His successors were, the Rev. James Richards, D. D. the Rev. Samuel Fisher, D. D. the Rev, William A. Mc Dowell, D. D. and the Rev. Albert Barnes, D. D. all living; not to mention the present incumbents of two churches in that beautiful and favored town.

I now transcribe the note to which I have so frequently referred. It occurs on page 183 of the MEMOIR of CLINTON, under date of March 20, 1828; in the same words, only that the name of Dr. Johns is spelt there incorrectly.

"I have the following anecdote from unquestionable authority. It has never, I think, been given to the public; but I received it

from the venerable clergyman, (the Rev. Dr. Hillyer,) who had it from the lips of the Rev. Dr. Johns himself.

"While the American army, under the command of Washington, lay encamped in the environs of Morristown, New Jersey, it occurred that the service of the communion, then observed semi-annually only, was to be administered in the Presbyterian church of that village. In a morning of the previous week, the General, after his accustomed inspection of the camp, visited the house of the Rev. Dr. Johns, then pastor of that church, and after the usual preliminaries, thus accosted him; 'Doctor, I understand that the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated with you next Sunday. I would learn if it accords with the canons of your church to admit communicants of another denomination?' The doctor rejoined, 'most certainly; ours is not the Presbyterian table, General, but THE LORD'S TABLE; and we hence give the Lord's invitation to all his followers, of whatever name.' The General replied, 'I am glad of it; that is as it ought to be: but as I was not quite sure of the fact, I thought I would ascertain it from

yourself, as I propose to join with you on that occasion. Though a member of the Church of England, I have no exclusive partialities.'

The Doctor re-assured him of a cordial welcome, and the General was found seated with the communicants the next Sabbath."

As a jurist and an experienced judge of evidence, I now appeal to you, dear sir, both for the competency and the credibility of this proof of the facts alleged. They are neither forgeries, nor fictions, nor fancies, but veritable facts. And they prove that WASHINGTON WAS A CHRISTIAN—at least so far as a sound profession of the faith of the Redeemer must be taken by us, who cannot search the heart, as evidence of the reality. And this fact is worth knowing, worth verifying, worth commemorating, worth publishing! There are thousands and millions in the world, and in either hemisphere, whom that announcement would more affect, in favor of the truth, than a hundred better arguments. Christianity is the only religion of rational evidence in the world. Its rational evidence, direct and indirect, internal, external, and collateral, is a pile magnificent, homogeneous, and impreg-

nable. Age only improves it. Time and history are its tributaries. While, among others, this—its adaptation to convince the greatest minds, and to subdue the proudest, by means so legitimate and so rational as an intelligent and candid acquaintance with its nature, with all its remedies for all our maladies, its provisions for our moral ruin, and its blood-bought mercies for our guilt; this adaptation is wonderful and overwhelming: and every example of its grand effect, especially every eminent example, is demonstrative of its divinity and monumental of its truth. Hence let us bless God that we may add the name of WASHINGTON to a galaxy of luminaries so illustrious! It cancels the splendor of all the infidels that ever lived. Let us contemplate its pure and placid dignity.

WASHINGTON

THE HERO, THE SAGE, THE AVOWED DISCIPLE.

Clarum et venerabile nomen

Illustrious name! and venerable more
Than myriads whom the vulgar great adore.
'Tis what the Father of his Country was
In act and purpose, claims our just applause.

For noble deeds by heaven in mercy sent;
Seen less in words than conduct and intent,
His life for liberty and man was spent:
'His name alone shall be his monument.'

Hence, ye profane! ye infidels, give way;
Here pours the truth its own celestial day.
Let all the nation learn, like him, t'obey,
Believe and worship, hope in God, and pray!

These sainted acts on principle were done;
In them the Christian and the Hero shone.
Then let his country all his virtues own;
But most the causes of each patriot one.

Deep sources of his excellent renown;
Let the whole world aspire to such a crown,
Beyond Time's chances, near th' eternal throne,
And copy grace and truth in WASHINGTON.

But I must conclude. What I have now done will not, I trust, grieve me on a death-bed; and if the cause of causes should in any wise receive benefit, glory to God alone. If in this address, such materials may seem to any person to be out of place or incongruous, I shall care little to refute the sentiment. *Out of season* duties have place, however, in the ministerial commission, as well as *in season* ones; and some will think, with the writer, that these facts had better be given to

the public, and duly vouched, even if all that is stately, courtly, and tasteful, in their style of introduction, should not be found eminently to grace their actual appearance. Nor am I certain, honored sir, that they are not just in place, on the whole, in this address. You know the parties, the places, and the particulars, many of them involved in the narrative; to say nothing of your official eminence, as the Chief Justiciary of your native state, which implies all the qualifications desired for their due and signal authentication to the world.

Christianity indeed, like the sun in the centre of dependent orbs, gives radiance to all belonging to the system, but derives it from God alone. To the religion of the Son of God, how profoundly are we all indebted! and what can we impart of lustre or renown, that we have not more received from it? *No flesh shall glory before God*—neither WASHINGTON nor PAUL. It is the character of the Christian that he loves to be humble—otherwise, he could never be a worshipper, never a disciple. His humility consists in thinking the truth about himself; his piety

in thinking, and his praise in speaking, the truth about God. To be a Christian, is the wealth and the wisdom of existence. If we are such, my honored senior brother in Christ, let us prepare especially for our grand and bright inheritance. For *all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

With sentiments of sincere esteem and fraternal affection in Christ Jesus, I remain, dear sir, your friend and servant,

SAMUEL HANSON COX.

Brooklyn, N. Y. September 1, 1842.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

THERE are two classes of persons in the respectable reading community, who are rarely, if ever, benefited, by the reading of the Holy Scriptures. Who can compute the damage to their souls!

The first of these classes is composed of those, who, rarely, if ever, read the Holy Scriptures. They read other books multitudinous. Novels, romances, newspapers, and some periodicals of useful or ornamental literature, they occasionally or constantly peruse. On their topics they converse. They see the great world through no other medium. Hence they never see the world as it is, because they never see it in the light of heaven. Much less do they in any sense see the world to come. Thus they live in a real delusion, or a voluntary ignorance, of the greatest, the

most interesting, and the most important things in the universe. What they know is trash, compared with what they neglect. Whether the Bible be a revelation from God—or not,—is a matter, into which they never had the virtue, or the sense, or the courage, seriously to inquire. Presently the dream vanishes. Death wakes them from the dotage of years. Prepared or unprepared, they die; and how many open their eyes on an undone eternity! They know — too late! since, if they die unbenefited by the Holy Scriptures, what other knowledge of theirs, no matter how characterized or how obtained, ever makes them *wise unto salvation*, or passes current in heaven, instead of that, which they have always in their practice despised on earth. 2 Tim. 3 : 15 ; Luke, 16 : 31.

Their other possessions, distinctions, and attainments, are no succedaneum for that *holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* However they figured here, with whatever sublunary fame their actions were decorated, and whether their names were Crœsus, Alexander, Hume, Gibbon, Napoleon, Byron, Sir Walter Scott, or Wellington, if they died

without the knowledge and the love of God, their OTHER THINGS are all worse than worthless, at his impartial tribunal, who *accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor.* The appeal is full of meaning, as it is of honesty and truth divine —— How *shall we escape* IF WE NEGLECT *so great salvation?* Ponder this, ye frivolous, ye vain!

The other class, to which we refer, is constituted of those, who read the Bible indeed, who respect it generally as divinely inspired, who acknowledge the duty of reading it, and who perform the duty with a general and a vague reverence for the grandeur and the solemnity of its inculcations; but who never adequately understand what it means; whose intelligence of its sense is so loose, and often so erroneous, that very little, if at all, are they spiritually benefited by the perusal. What merchant could conduct a prosperous commerce, if he did not more correctly understand all the documents he reads, writes, or signs, in connection with it? And is it safe to transact business for eternity, on prin-

ciples too superficial and presumptuous for the transactions of time?

The examples of this guilty error are innumerable. Every one is something of an original in this. He has his own way of neglecting and slighting the inspiration that he reads. The amount of genuine intelligence, is very small, compared with the quantum of reading performed, and the myriads of persons, professors and non-professors, who are condemned by the interrogatory, *Understandest thou what thou readest?* No! Some of them seem to regard it as profane, or dangerous, even to think of *knocking that it may be opened.* Some tell us that investigation leads to skepticism. If it does—to argue a moment from such premises of stupidity—it leads away from something quite as bad, and much more unpromising; a dreamy and mechanical habit that profanes the service, a wholesale belief that is little better than a retail infidelity, and a bigoted darkness that makes a merit of its own irreligious folly and selfishness. How long must a man travel round a circle to find its end—How far must a wandering peasant miss his way, and

proceed in that direction, so as to get home—How sincerely or extensively must a bewildered helmsman steer his vessel wrong, at sea, in order to make at last the desired haven—How many miracles, that were never wrought, and that never will be, must God perform, so as to make folly as good as wisdom, error as precious as truth, or superstition as salutary to the soul as *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?*

If we could persuade these readers to pause and think—as they proceed; to read only one-tenth at a time, of their ordinary allowance, and to read it ten times better than their ordinary performance; to inquire, as they would in perusal of a letter from a well-beloved, long-absent, and far-distant friend, What does he mean—What is the precise sense of this passage—Am I not in danger of mistaking his views here, and thus of injuring his deservings and embarrassing our correspondence? and if they were in the habit of this common caution, in the most uncommon and momentous relations of existence, how would genuine divine knowledge circulate in

the world, to the improvement of the good and the advantage of the whole community!

The great business of the ministers of religion, as the advocates of scripture, consists much in disabusing it. The grand desideratum of the wise, in reference to the revealed oracles, is to understand them, and to present them, precisely as they are. Their intrinsic excellence is at one with inspiration itself; which is sovereign of the world of sentiment, just as its Great Author is Sovereign of the universe of intelligences. Hence are the Holy Scriptures their own commendation and eulogium. "Speak of me as I am," exclaims the Moor in the fable. Surely this is a claim of sufficient modesty. So God will speak to all men, and to every man, in the day of judgment. What will then be our condemnation, is his own praise forever; that each should be thought of, and spoken of, as he is! Thus truth is appropriately and supremely the praise of Jehovah. It is the poetry of his praise, even with angelic ministers and minstrels around his throne. Flattery, mistake, extravagance, has nothing to do with it; as falsehood has nothing, igno-

rance nothing, and insincerity nothing, in that world of perfection and love.

What is true of their Author, is analogously true of the Holy Scriptures themselves. "Speak of them as they are. Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice." But oh! how terribly abused is that Book, the Bible! How many of its professed expounders speak of it as it is—NOT! They dictate to it; they sectarianize from it; they torture its testimonies; they perplex its argumentation; they mistake its meaning; they supersede its doctrine; they discern not its utility; they impose their own sense, or their own nonsense, and then advertise the result as its sense; and they often blunder at its phraseology, misunderstand its scope, sunder rudely its connection, pervert its metaphors, put figurative for literal and literal for figurative; and thus they bear the burdens, and carry the messages of the Lord to men, so as no footman or common messenger on earth could be endured, *by him that sendeth him*, were he as careless, as presumptuous, as silly, as superficial, or as unfaithful. *Wo be unto me if I preach* NOT THE GOSPEL.

Why, says one, did not God give us a volume that we could not pervert or misconceive? This silly question is so common, that we give it, for that reason only, a passing notice. We answer—

1. It is a plain matter of fact, and momentous as well as palpable, that He has not done it. On the contrary, the Bible is a wonderful Book in this respect, as well as others, that it is so very susceptible of perversion. There is no error, philosophism, or foolery, that may not be plausibly vindicated, and speciously proved, from its pages. If a man latently desires to be wrong, or to escape from what is right, or to sanction some lie of his own, the Bible will afford him a pretext not only, but a perfect paradise, in which to luxuriate by the ingenious perversion of its principles.

> And wherefore? will not God impart his light
> To them that ask it? Freely. 'Tis his joy,
> His glory, and his nature, to impart.
> But to the proud, uncandid, insincere,
> Or negligent inquirer, not a spark.

Hence, Unitarianism, Universalism, Arminianism, Pelagianism, Transcendentalism, Pan-

theism, Coleridgism, Perfectionism, and a thousand other isms—down to Mormonism and Puseyism, affect to vindicate their inventions by an appeal to its pages.

2. The demand for such an oracle, is virtually a claim that God would release us all from all obligation, or devolve its total volume only on himself, and so make it the only object of his government, to save us all, by all means, and at all events. What a premium for indolence, presumption, voluptuous indulgence, and all manner of squalid unrighteousness, were such a boon to us, and such a system of things, as it would by fearful revolution introduce! What impiety even to desire it!

3. We are accountable as well as sinful, and on probation under a system of grace; and as such, the Bible as it is, is the very Book which Infinite Wisdom and Goodness saw fit and suitable for us; and if we err, it is plainly our own fault, and to be referred, as such, to the faulty causes in us that influenced the deviation.

Besides all this, every one must take the consequences of his own actions. He must

reap as he sows, and what he sows. Millions, who talk about the truth, and show externally as its friends, are inwardly its grace-abandoned enemies. And the Lord knoweth them. *And for this cause, namely,* BECAUSE *they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved,* FOR THIS CAUSE, *God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned,* who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

The demand therefore for an oracle THAT WE COULD NOT PERVERT OR MISCONCEIVE, is a demand the most unreasonable and impious; however it may coincide with the feelings of sinners, or the imaginings of popish infallibility, or suit the miserable worshippers of tradition. It is a demand to have our accountableness repealed; the law of God abrogated; the system of probation annulled; the whole Bible superseded or totally revolutionized; the divine moral government annihilated: and instead of these, a scheme of things introduced, of mechanical fate and

* This word ought always to be pronounced solemnly in two syllables.

purely passive destiny; in which God should be the sole moral agent in the universe, and he properly no moral agent either; the salvation of his throne should become only physical; the system of redemption then must be forever precluded; the rewards and punishments of eternity should become things impossible as the qualities of sin or holiness; and universal confusion and anarchy must ensue throughout all his dominions. Let us then approve of our accountableness, submit to the sovereign wisdom of God in the appointment of our condition and all its relations on the earth, and so seek, that we may obtain, in Christ Jesus, the knowledge and the salvation he has so graciously revealed. His testimonies are true, his promises are infallible; and both are rich, suited to us, and sufficient for us.

The volume of inspiration exists, near to us and accessible to all. Every man has an important relation to it; and whether he improves it or not, that volume will instrumentally judge him in the great day. John 12: 48. The only escape is in piety and the inheritance of the divine mercy. To

make men read the Bible more, and in a way of more profit, is our great desire. In order to this, who can tell the importance of teaching them, to *think* while they read! to doubt, only that they may examine! to ponder, only that they may understand—approve—trust—and love, *the true sayings of God?* If we can in any way assist or prompt such a process, and such a habit, we shall realize a grand attainment. And if, in doing it, it may be ours to correct mistakes, in reference to the sense of important passages, however hallowed "by authority" or ancestral dotage may be in certain cases the superseded view, we may say, with the blessed Paul, *I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

It is observed by some writer, that "passive impressions and active habits" make up the education and the sentiment of the million. They take some impression passively and incidentally; never inquire into its quality or truth; allow it a residence in their bosoms; yield unconsciously to its influence; and then, insensibly and soon, act, as it were, by system, in accordance with it. In the meantime the impression is wholly or partially erroneous, and

its influence perverts the way of its victim. It attaints all his modes of thinking, speaking, acting, and reasoning. Hence, if he is born and nurtured a Jew, his passive impressions are allowed to keep him one, in spite of the dreaded light of Christianity; and so of a unitarian, a papist, an infidel, a formalist, a ritualist, or any other votary of falsehood.

The exceptions to the rule are only the confirmations of its truth. The special grace of God makes millions of them. But imperfect as grace itself depictures us in this world, it is surprising to see among good men how many flaming examples of the rule, we find, where we might expect its exceptions only. A man reads a passage of scripture, or listens to some other reader; and this perhaps in early life, when most susceptible of impressions and least capable of manly thought; he takes an impression, and that a wrong one, of its meaning. Alas! truth could scarce stamp him more indelibly, with her royal signet. He becomes a preacher, a scholar, a divine. All his sanction goes for his impression—which he has never examined or doubted. He guards it with religious

horror against all correction and all investigation. He writes a sermon, or perhaps a commentary; and there it is, dominant and invincible, defying argument, evidence, scripture, and God; and this, till the man dies, though his error lives after him.

How often has a text been misconceived in its meaning; owing probably to an error in the translation; or to a vicious punctuation; or to a doting carelessness: when the result is a sermon as the fruit of the mistake; then a new ism, with a brief immortality for its maker's name prefixed to it; then perhaps a whole sect started, to take care of the sinuous progeny, and nurse it to some growth of monstrous maturity and mischief. Those who have studied a little the history of sects and isms and schisms, modern or ancient, will recognise the truth of the description. They will also unite with others, in the desire that such evils may not be enacted, over and over again, in all coming generations. Let us then do something to prevent them. Let us try to show scripture as it is. Some of its imperfections in our vernacular, have resulted from the change of language, since

the present English version was made, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, now (1842) more than 230 years ago.

In the just interpretation of scripture, two things are primarily to be considered—

1. Its inspiration. It is THEOPNEUSTON, that is, *given by inspiration of God.* Its propositions are not only true, but they are divinely true. They are *the true sayings of God.* They are his living oracles. It is God that speaks in them. This truth lies at the basis of Christianity. The man who feels it not, or who disparages it in any way, deserves to be regarded as an infidel rather than a Christian, as a blasphemer rather than a theologian. It is just this great truth of truths, ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD, that invests the Bible with all its incomparable authority and importance. And it is the belief of this great truth, that makes the contents of scripture seem to be, as truly they are, so worthy of study and universal attention.

2. Every passage of scripture means something, which it is the direct object of the interpreter, and the proper duty of the

preacher, to ascertain and communicate. As God is its Author, so God, when he inspired it, meant something specific in the words he used. There is no alternative; but to deny inspiration, or to degrade scripture to the ambiguous impertinence of the heathen oracles—which is the same thing.

Now, we read the words of God, and ask, What is his meaning, here and everywhere? That meaning is what is intended, though somewhat technically, by the native sense—the soul of scripture—the mind of the Spirit.

To find and use the native sense of scripture, is the grand desideratum of theology. It is just what the church needs, and what the world needs, and what our schools of theology primely need. It is that which hath the dominion. Who can surpass it, or supersede it, or dispense with it? Nay, whose interest is it to mistake it, or to be ignorant of it, or to sophisticate, or to conceal it? Its worth cannot be calculated by any arithmetic of creatures, or equaled by any imaginable aggregation of riches.

Too often is it superseded, or rendered unintelligible, or diluted until it becomes ele-

gantly insipid, by the learned theories, the studied style, the fine writing, and the impertinent inventions of men. *We are not as* MANY *who corrupt* [*dilute*] *the word of God. The foolishness of God is wiser than men. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.*

It is accordingly our aim in every passage to evolve its proper meaning, its native sense; and so to disabuse it of whatever errors may have dishonored its heavenly beauty. In doing this it is our view at once to aid the thoughts of ordinary readers, and to give some possibly useful hints to whatever preacher of the gospel may deign to read our performance. There are some masters in Israel, who seem never to have thought, or seriously believed, that there is such a thing as the native sense!

The Greek of the New Testament is certainly peculiar. Whatever may be the reason of this, which is not now our inquiry, it is a fact which the interpreter must consider. So the style of every writer is peculiar, among

all the eight. PAUL and LUKE are by far the most elevated and learned in their style and their education. They were fellow travelers, intimate friends, and similar in their manner and phraseology. Each of them shows the scholar, as well as the amanuensis of the inspiring Spirit. JOHN is thought to be the least learned, though so seraphic in his piety; uniting simplicity and sublimity in a way unequaled: witness his prodigy of the Apocalypse! MATTHEW and MARK resemble each other in plain and unadorned narrative, stating facts with the greatest truth but with no embellishment. The style of PETER is sometimes involved and difficult. So of JUDE. JAMES is ethical, practical, severe, insisting on the fruits of piety: but withal very intelligible, discriminative, and ordinarily precise.

Now it is plain that all these peculiarities, and all such as these, must be studied, and duly estimated, in order to arrive at the native sense of every writer. Hence it is not the Lexicon alone, far from it, that can show that sense to the interpreter. The opposite mistake has made more than one sect of literalizing exclusionists. The Lexicon or-

dinarily gives only the general or classical sense, with little or no demonstration or regard to the usage of the inspired writers. Hence many a theologian has learnedly misrepresented a passage, with the consent of the Lexicon and multiplied classical authorities: and so has edified the bigotry or schism of his hearers, most speciously and quite sincerely too. Unless we can determine the USUS LOQUENDI of a sacred writer, that is, the very sense in which he uses the word in question, our classics will often pervert our way and infatuate our judgment. The style of the New Testament is that of Hellenistic Hebrew; a Jewish matron with a Greek pallium thrown over her.

If a word is peculiar or distinctive, it may be proper not only to compare other places of its occurrence, but to note all the instances in which the same writer uses it, and ponder them singly and totally. We may do the same with advantage in reference to all the other books or writers of the New Testament. It will often be of auxiliary usefulness, to enumerate and consult all the instances in which the word occurs at large,

and all in particular in which it is used by the same writer. Every theologian, that has proved the value of a good CONCORDANCE —SCHMIDII, for example—to this end, will approve the sayings of a modern preacher; "my Greek Testament and my Greek Concordance are to me the most important books in my library; and as a preacher, nay as a Christian, their worth seems to me incalculable."

If the word in question occurs infrequently, once, for example, in the whole volume of the New Tesstament or twice, or thrice, or, at best, in a few instances; or, if it appears frequently, say fifty, or a hundred times, or oftener, the knowledge of the fact, as it is in each case, may be of great importance to the student. It gives him a blush or synopsis of what he has to do, and also of his means of investigation and comparison. The evidence is before him. He sees how often it occurs in Paul—in Luke—in John, or any other writer; and his mind receives suggestions and facilities for a successfully prosecuted examination. To compare such related instances, and withal get no new ideas of the

sense of scripture, no fresh occasions of knowledge divinely important, is perhaps possible :—just as it is possible for some animals with long ears—though for them a thing much more improbable—to come to a pure springhead of living water, when they are thirsty, and drink not at all. For one, the writer asks leave to record his own conviction that such investigation is the very way in which for an educated ministry to study the Holy Scriptures ; since he has proved its value—far less indeed than duty and propriety required, as he owns with sincere humiliation ; but still—enough to raise its excellence very high in the scale of his devout estimation. It has given him more intelligence in the things of God ; more conviction of what is the truth ; more confidence in preaching the gospel ; more elevation above the atmosphere of vapors and hobbies and isms ; more rich and various furniture for the sacred desk ; more stability in religious vision ; more *joy and peace in believing ;* and more vigor and equability of faith : and so has done him more substantial good, probably, than all other ways and means,

with the use of all the other books in his library.

It may be alleged, that it is still a dangerous way, especially to be attempted by some preachers. We reply—It is very dangerous for some men to be preachers! Some preachers are not in their vocation, and for them preaching itself is a tremendous service of presumption and folly. Has God any need of corrupters or simpletons or drivelers at his altars? Has he called them? Will he bless them? Can they return to a more suitable occupation one moment too soon? But if, in addition to genuine piety, they possess a sound and respectable natural understanding, and are decently learned, will any man allege that they cannot be trusted with the Greek Testament and the Greek Concordance? Why? Is it because the dark ages were better than the reformed ages? or human authority preferable to *the very words which the Holy Ghost teacheth?* or ignorance a good qualification for the ambassador of Christ? or mist, and vapor, and impenetrable fog, proper for THE EYE of the church and the medium of its vision? Are

we PUSEYITES, or has the NEWMAN-IA of Oxford made us rabid and immedicable? or do we desire to go to Rome for information, and get scripture interpreted at the head-quarters of all ghostly "authority?" *There shall be false teachers among you—let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind—from such withdraw thyself—from such turn away.*

It is too often the case that an interpreter is contented with what the passage will bear? now, poor sufferer! it is astonishing often to see what it will bear and what burdens it has to bear. It is not the Inquisition alone that tortures the witnesses. In the meantime, the torturer is contented because the sense imposed is possibly true in itself, and in its place perhaps might be very salutary doctrine. Still, the question returns; Is it the native sense of the passage? or, only an extraneous graft or insertion? If the latter, Is this interpretation? Is it the way of *a workman that needeth not to be ashamed?* Alas! even in pious and learned commentaries, when we consult them as aids to the sense, how often do they rather beguile us away from it, with their voluminous irrele-

vant remarks on some other topics; as if their devotional exuberance and impertinent goodishness, were better than directly meeting the point, and either explaining it, or honestly confessing, 'I do not know!' It is not often that greatness is so ingenuous; or, that *the deep saith, It is not in me;* however honest, and true, and neccessary, the averment would seem—if it were only once made!

The punctuation of the scriptures, both original and translated, is entirely the work of man. As it is not at all identified with inspiration, and serves only to illustrate, or often to obscure and even to pervert it, it is *per se* of no authority and requires to be jealously examined by the interpreter. Punctuation is commentary. Dreadful that it should sometimes be obscuration and perversion too! The Masoretic points are a commentary on the text of the original Hebrew, that sometimes becomes very unfriendly and really perilous in a high degree to the native sense; requiring a deeper erudition in that department, touching the philosophy of the oriental tongues, for its cor-

rection, than any that is ordinarily attained even by our eminent scholars. But our remarks at present respect mainly our common English version of the New Testament. How often does the sense live or die, by the presence or the removal of a single point; and often by the marks of a parenthesis, or by their absence where the sense natively depends on them! often by mistaking irony for direct statement, or a phrase, or an idiom, or some other figurative peculiarity of the original, for a grave literality that must by all means be transferred into our uncongenial English!

It is frequently the case that the mood in the original is perfectly equivocal, and must be resolved on general principles, whether it be indicative, imperative, or interrogative; since the form of the verb, in the second person plural, for example, is often, in all these cases, precisely one and the same. Yet the difference of rendering, by mistake, is sometimes prodigious, both for absurdity and impropriety of sentiment; and this where it is authorized already in the common version. It were easy to produce instances of

this, though less in place in this connection. Our translators, and printers, and editors, and polyglot notators, have sometimes erred, in their supplemental italicizing; in their marginal readings; and especially in their way of cutting up the sacred text into chapters and verses. A common letter to a friend could ill endure such artificial and often careless or at least erring mutilations. Sometimes our translators are commentators too, giving a gloss of their own to the injury of the sense of the original; and though we acquit them in the main of all intentional error, *and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake*, yet we think their imperfections ought to be noted and their mistakes appreciated.

A genuine protestant theologian, aims singly at the word of God, and its correct interpretation, according to the native sense. He is great, sound, safe, good, and excellent, only as he achieves and exemplifies this pure and rare professional orthodoxy; this identity of perfect wisdom; this vitality of *the mind of the Spirit*. It is this alone that shall endure the ordeal of *fire*, to the test of

which all so called christian doctrines shall be unsparingly subjected. What a conflagration! Folly shall not there usurp the place of wisdom; nor human authority or exclusive arrogance exalt itself *above all that is called God or that is worshipped.* No man shall retain a technicality of learning, or a symbol of orthodoxy, or a phrase of canting clannishness, that cannot endure that penetrating and impartial examiner, when *the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.* O that we were all practically wise to anticipate the decisions of that day and to correspond with them! God will honor all his own truth, as he revealed it to us, and in its native sense, as *gold, silver, precious stones,* on which not even the fire can make any impression: while all other materials of the house that *any man* has builded, though on the one alone true *foundation that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,* shall be proved combustible and contemptible, as *wood, hay, stubble,* and shall perish unpitied in the powerful flame. A sense of this ought to make the student reverential and careful, the theologian humble and dis-

criminating, the interpreter faithful and wise, the protestant impartial and intrepid for his God. It ought to induce the spirit and the qualifications of devotion and prayer; that *the Father of lights*, who is also *the Father of spirits* and *the Father of mercies*, would be pleased to vouchsafe his own all-commanding influence, to prosper our researches and preserve us in the truth.

SELECTION I.

TO DO IT BY AND BY

THE phrase *by and by* occurs four times in the New Testament, and is always ambiguous to the common reader. In modern use it fairly means—after a while; some time hence; not now. It is used to indicate postponement and prevent urgency. Thus, a speaker in Congress, when interrupted, was heard to rejoin—'Let the gentleman have patience. I know at what he aims, we shall come to it *by and by*.' This is now the usage of the English world. But it is nearly the very reverse of the usage in England two centuries ago, when our version was made. Thus, *by and by* was originally one of the strongest adverbial forms to express—near, this instant, presto, with no delay, on the moment, quickly, very quickly.

The reason of this change, which was gradually introduced, is probably found in the

dilatoriness of human nature; spoiling all the adverbs in our language, which properly mean instant despatch. 'Come here, my child,' says a parent; the answer is, 'Yes, directly;' and he stays, as he intended. So 'immediately, presently, coming, coming,' when the speakers mean that it shall be not now, but after a time, or at their leisure! The spirit of procrastination has perverted *by and by* to suit its purpose. The sinner ought to repent *by and by* in the original sense of the expression.

> All promise, is poor dilatory man;
> And that through every age.

Mat. 13: 21. Christ says of the stony-ground hearer, *when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word,* BY AND BY *he is offended.*

Campbell says, *instantly.* There can be no doubt about the meaning of the original, ευθυς or ευθεως.

Mark, 6: 25. *I will that thou give me* BY AND BY *in a charger the head of John the Baptist.*

We once saw an eloquent sermon on this text, designed to show that

'A shameless woman is the worst of men;'

in which it was a distinct item in the account, 'fourthly,' or otherwise, that here the malice of Herodias was so deep and calculating, so deliberate and well considered. The point was urged to this effect.

You see, my brethren, how the comparatively artless Salome betrays her prompter. She enters, *being before instructed of her mother*, and orders her speech warily before the king; as if to say, 'not now exactly, to spoil our high festivity or interrupt the progress of our glee. But two or three hours hence, when the dancing is over, and the revelry ceased, and the company gone, then I desire the boon, at thy pleasure, *by and by*.'

Herod however, it seems, understood her more correctly. *And* IMMEDIATELY *the king sent an executioner—and he went and beheaded him in the prison.*

Luke, 17: 7. *But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him* BY AND BY, *when he is come from the*

field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink.

Here the sense of *immediately* is necessary to the understanding of the passage; and when perceived, the propriety of it proves itself completely.

Luke, 21: 9. *But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not* BY AND BY; is not soon or immediately.

That is, they will not terminate so soon as you might imagine; they will succeed each other and continue to try you.

All this results from the change of the meaning of words and phrases in the space of two or three centuries; and there are, and ever will be many more such instances, in our English not only, but also in French, German, and all other modern and living languages. Nor is this wonderful. It is the character of language in every age. Horace remarked it some years before the

birth of the Savior; and it will be a source of incessant and insidious changes in all subsequent ages. On this account peculiarly, the vigilance of the critics must be continually active; that the sense, which never changes, may be preserved in its immutability, through all the verbal mutations of our complicate and copious vernacular.

Debemur morti nos nostraque.
* * * mortalia facta peribunt;
Necdum sermonum stet honos et gratia vivax.
Multa renascentur quae jam cecidere; cadentque
Quae nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus;
Quem penes arbitrium est, et jus, et norma loquendi.

Both we and ours must die! all deeds of ours
Perish forgotten with their names and powers.
The grace of language changes still with time;
Words obsolete shall yet renew their prime:
And those shall fall that now in honor live;
Since such is custom's stern prerogative.
Whate'er she wills the realm of words obeys;
And wisdom follows but to learn her ways.

SELECTION II.

THE AX LAID AT THE ROOT

Mat. 3: 10. *And now also* THE AX IS LAID UNTO THE ROOT *of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.*

The same identically occurs in Luke, 3: 9.

Let us not forget that the passage before us is a part of that abstract, afforded us by two evangelists, of the preaching of John, the herald and the harbinger of Christ. It was his purpose to characterize and describe the coming age under the Messiah; and so to correct the false anticipations of his countrymen, as well as to define and impress the truth, in contradistinction to their loose and vague and dreamy conceptions of its nature. Hence his words are applicable to us, to the times and constitutions of heaven under which we live. Hence too their great importance, as characterizing the Christian dispensation.

By a dispensation in this chief and technical, yet scriptural sense of the term, we

mean; An authoritative system or constitution of things in religion, relating to the church of God and the order of his worship among men, in which, by certain characteristic forms and with definite degrees of light, the will of God is manifested, and our duty indicated and modified in relation to it, so that acceptable worship can be rendered only in obedience and cordial conformity to it.* *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but* HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF GOD *abideth* forever.

The dispensations revealed in the Word of God, are seven; namely,

PARADISIACAL, lasting, as some have theorized, 40 days.

ADAMIC,	. . . .	.	1656 years.
NOAHIC,	. . till A. M.	2083	. 427 "
ABRAHAMIC,	. " " "	2513	. 430 "
MOSAIC,	. . " " "	4038†	. 1525 "

CHRISTIAN, indubitably till the end of the world, and thus far 34 years less than the Christian era; as 1842—34=1808.

IMMORTALITY, who can compute the years, the eras, the cycles, of eternity!

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* Compare Ep. 1: 10, with Gal. 4: 4. Heb. 1: 2. 9: 10. 28. 12: 26–29. 1 Pet. 1: 20. 1 John 2: 7. 8. 1 Cor. 11: 26. Acts, 1: 11.

† According to the vulgar era, which ought to commence four years earlier.

The first was not of the gospel, but of the law; probationing the species under it in the persons of our first parents; and the last, though of the gospel, is not in time: hence, the dispensations of *the everlasting gospel* in time are five only, each named from the personage who officiates at the head of it; namely, ADAM, NOAH, ABRAHAM, MOSES, CHRIST.

Each dispensation is surpassed by that which supersedes it, and all the excellence of the former is included too in its successor. Hence, the last in time is the best also. It includes all the good of all preceding dispensations, and it incomparably transcends and excels them all. The whole seven may be well fixed mnemonically in our minds, by a word which the sum of their initials regularly constitutes—PANAMCI. If the word is new, it is useful and not wholly arbitrary.

How important it is for us to understand the dispensation of God under which we live! under which our characters are forming, our habits becoming permanent, our hearts developing themselves, and our destinies taking their class, and their direction, and their flight, for eternity! We are to expect no other dispensation in the present

world ; and hence we must improve this, and participate its blessedness, or be lost forever Hence too, we are to expect the MILLENNIUM, not as another, but only as the bright meridian of the present dispensation. The noon is not another day. Hence we are prepared to read the credentials of all impostors, whereof ancient history, as well as modern times afford so many examples ; from Manichæus, Montanus, Mohammed, down to——all the miserable NEFANDI whose appearance has disgraced our own age and infatuates thousands in the nineteenth century, as each the herald of another dispensation--*which is not another.* Witness the terrors of some poor dotards, anticipating the end of the world next year, that is, in 1843, for certain !

Hence too the great importance of the passage we are considering ! It has the jurisdiction of our times and of all subsequent ages to the end of the world. It evinces some of the fixed principles of the mediatorial empire, which Christ came, by his mission and his passion, not to destroy, but to aggrandize and fulfil. The same principles have existed in all previous dispensations of the system of

mediatorial mercy; but in the present only are they displayed with a light and a glory, to which all previous ages were tributary, and which are among the brightest lustres of this last best dispensation of the grace of God in time.

The popular meaning of the passage is known unhappily throughout the English world. We say, unhappily; since the popular meaning is false, injurious, subversive of the sense divine, and contrary in spirit and scope to the true rendering. It is not only an error, but a great error, a common one, a dire perversion.

The point in question is the meaning of the figure—*laying the ax at the root;* that is, popularly, in the act of felling the tree, as an incumbrance and a nuisance, putting your main strength to it; hewing up the tree by cutting off the roots, and so, in a fierce derascinating process, not leaving a stump or a vestige of the extirpated tree.

This idea has often made radical reformers in church and state, and has sometimes given of their spirit to radical preachers. It has made fanatics, exscinders, and incendia-

ries. It has been the motto of many a reckless leader, whose way has been to level—not upward, by elevating the ignoble, but—downward only, by sinking the elevated; by denying the real, as well as the factitious, differences of society; and, by a course of rash experiments with the social state, the tendency of which, whatever may be either the motive or the consequence, is only to re-enact the profligate horrors of the French revolution, with its butchery, its anarchy, and its atheism. They say, "spare not; *lay the ax at the root*, make thorough work, fear nothing."

The true sense is very different and perfectly defensible; even as patience, forbearance, gracious probation, and merciful delay, solemn warning and ample space for repentance, are different from haste, fury, and recklessness, cutting up by the roots—as if the process of felling, and the demand for fruit, commenced at the same time and with the same tree. Is this like the ways of our God?

We give the true view in paraphrase—And now also, throughout this dispensation of which I am the herald, *the ax lieth* on the

ground in readiness, *near the root of the tr ee.* It is quiescent and inactive. It reposeth there conspicuous, in waiting and in warning; with solemn menace of its ultimate use, if, after a graciously vouchsafed probation, there be no good fruit on the trees; since then, at last, it must be used, and every such tree shall be felled as incorrigible, and made fuel to the inexorable flame. Compare Luke, 13 : 6–9. Heb. 6 : 7, 8.

The false view has been occasioned in part by a frequent equivoque in our language, between *lay* and *lie.* The former or active has been erroneously preferred to the neuter sense, and hence the grand mistake. There is something similar in Latin, between *jacio* or *jacitur*, to hurl, cast, throw, and *jaceo*, or *jacet*, to lie, recline, rest, or remain in a state of decumbency. The version of Beza follows the Vulgate, indifferently, thus; " securis ad radicem arborum posita est;" and scarce a commentator or a preacher ever gives the correct rendering of the figure. The reason may be, first, that the passive first impression of every one of us, to whom the English is vernacular, is in agreement with

the erring view; and second, that it is so much the natural temper of man, as having more of passion than principle, to be impatient and leveling, that he more spontaneously inclines to the wrong, than the right, in its interpretation. There are some divines of illustrious name, who cannot bear the idea even of probation, or so much as the *bona fide* offer of the gospel and its salvation to them that perish; because it suits their symbols and their sympathies to despatch all in a word—with THEIR VIEW of the decrees of God. To such theories, facts are of no importance; they are mist and emptiness!

There can be no doubt of the correct view. In the original it is as clear as the sun. The word κειται, rendered *is laid*, or *lieth*, partakes not of the active sense at all, but of the neuter only. A few examples of its occurrence will show this to the satisfaction even of the English reader. *A city that* IS SET *on a hill cannot be hid. Come, see the place where the Lord* LAY. *And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe* LYING *in a manger. This child* IS SET *for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. Other foundation can no man lay than*

that IS LAID, *which is Jesus Christ. Knowing that* I AM SET *for the defence of the gospel. And the city* LIETH *four square; the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.*

The whole literature of the English language is infected with the wrong view of this passage. Instead of other examples, we cite that of Lord Brougham, who is thought by some to be, if not the wisest man, yet the greatest paragon of universal learning* now

* It is impossible as a universal genius, if there be properly any such thing, to be equally profound or ready in every chapter of the encyclopedia of letters and the arts. Dr. Watts perhaps came nearer to it than any other man known to literature. When Lord Brougham occupied the throne of the chancery of England, the well versed lawyers in that astute department of British jurisprudence, were sometimes the cruel, sometimes the just, censors of defects and errors, against which neither the fame of scholarship, nor unparalleled popularity, nor the honors of recent peerage, afforded an adequate protection to his lordship. Sir Edward Sugden, that star of professional learning, was especially severe on some occasions, and never without reaching the sensitiveness of his "shining mark." After listening once, it is said, to the florid and laical wisdom of his lordship, in one of those decisions of renown by which he was wont to clear so soon the calendar of cases, without clearing equally the points of law involved in them, Sir Edward showed his wit and

on the stage. We give from memory the passage, in the main, much as it was uttered. His Lordship was speaking in parliament on the slavery question, with reference to the repeal of the system of apprenticeship, and in favor of universal and absolute emancipation as its substitute, when he said something like the following—

"My Lords, we have hitherto been tampering with this great evil, this poisoned and pestiferous UPAS of human degradation. We have indeed hewn off some of the exterior

his indignation equally by the reflection—"What a pity his lordship did not know a little of chancery law! because then his lordship would know a little of almost every thing."

We have no question that his lordship knows a little of divinity too, though this possibly in the general; at any rate, we are not to censure severely a layman, even if he were the Lord Chancellor of England, because his knowledge of sacred philology, criticism, and hermeneutics may be not a little imperfect—when so many of the mighty mitres above him, are dark, if not brainless, in those excellent departments of their own nominal profession. It is remarkable too that such names as those of CHILLINGWORTH among the stars of the seventeenth century, and my own excellent and learned friend, the REVEREND DOCTOR J. H. MERLE D'AUBIGNE, in our own time, use habitually the popular and the erroneous conception.

branches, by our apprenticeship act; but yet, my Lords, the tree stands, to the dishonor of England, the Empire and the age, a scandal to our holy religion, and an opprobrious sarcasm on our professions of liberty. My Lords, we must now do something thorough and effective. We must not leave the tree, or even its stump standing to reproach us. We must come up to the work like men. God and the nations are looking at us. The muse of history is writing the record of our dishonor, and the clamors of the nation demand the measure at our hands. Let us then, my Lords, fell this tree before the world. It is high time we were doing it, instead of talking about it to no profit. Let us speak by actions, my Lords! Let us *lay the ax at the root* of the tree, responsive alike to the language of scripture and the conscience of mankind."

It is not our object here to quarrel with the argument of his Lordship, or to pronounce a benediction on the tree he proposes to exterminate; but simply to give an example, and that a prominent one, where hundreds might be adduced, of the total misap-

prehension, and the popular perversion, of the figure in the sacred text. His Lordship's error is excusable quite, compared with theirs, who, occupying the sacred office, never read it in the original before they preach on it from the translation—or, never understand it, if they do. The writer has heard sermons, and one quite elaborate, in which the blunder was at once blinding, wildering, pitiable, and utterly subversive of the sense. Now, such a sermon, however good the style, or sound the general doctrine, or impressive the delivery, does ordinarily less for the proper edification of the church, than would accrue from the simple science of correct explanation. Yet this service is appreciated by few. The million of church-goers do not desire to be instructed. They are imaginative and fusible. Theirs is a religion of sympathy and sensation. They had rather feel—they desire to be melted by eloquence—to weep—to feel better—to go home and forget it all, praising the sermon and collauding the preacher.

The Christian dispensation properly extends from the day of Pentecost to the end of time. We are now living under it; and our

destinies are maturing, as well as developing, in subordination to it, continually, and by the unchanging constitution of our God. Each individual is a tree in his great fruitery or orchard. What care, what skill, what culture, what forbearance, what merciful probation does He show, even to the trees which hitherto have produced no good fruit. Some of them too are almost a hundred years old! But the ax is ready. It lieth near the root, in mercy and in menace. If a tree brings forth good fruit, the ax will never hurt it, nor the flame touch it. It will soon be kindly transplanted to the gardens of paradise. The ax will never come into contact with such a tree. It might rust and rot near its root, and be all innoxious while it lieth there. On such trees it *hath no* more *power* than *the second death* on them that are *blessed and holy.*

And how long does God wait with the other sort! Alas! sometimes forty, fifty, or even one hundred years, and yet no good fruit. How does his providence furnish a commentary on his word, and give the true exegesis of its meaning! How long does he forbear to use the ax, while *the long-suffering*

of God waiteth with men, even as *in the days of Noah!* This forbearance of God, his patience with the wicked, is a wonderful theme! He has *no pleasure at all in the death of him that dieth.* He does not wish to use the ax. He is morally—so to speak—forced to it, by the final impenitence of the wicked. He plants the tree in a good soil. He gives it ample cultivation and fair opportunity. The rains and the showers, and the dews of heaven, alternating with the genial heat and brightness of the sun, fall on it. And yet there is no good fruit. It is a worthless tree. The heavenly dove will not build her nest in its branches. It is soon deserted, and devoted. *A tree whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead—nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.* It is at last *hewn down and cast into the fire.*

The Christian dispensation is different in its proper character from the common anticipations and sentiments of men, scarce less, than it proved to be from those of the ancient Jews, to whom the announcement we are considering was originally made, by the harbinger of the Son of God. It is not a

system of partiality, or flattery, or indulgence, or indifference, or self-righteousness, on the one hand; nor, on the other, of fatality, or rigor, or summary vengeance, or necessitated despair. There is plenty of mercy and plenty of redemption for all men; but no man will be saved unless he accepts it. Without actual obedience to the gospel no one can be saved. Good fruit must be produced. It is indispensable. The alternative to *every tree* is the ax and the fire. Nor is there any truth in the revealed system to contradict this, or supersede it, or disparage it. The influence of the Holy Spirit is striving with men, is importunate towards us, and long waits on us; but never will it save us without our cordial acquiescence. The elect of God are identified with them that produce the good fruit; *trees of righteousness shall they be called, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.* But how do they glorify him, who produce no good fruit? What promises, or what evidences, or what decrees, give assurance of their salvation? Shall their presumption save them, or their supineness?

The nature of the fruit, which is the only

alternative of the fire, is of great interest and moment that it be correctly understood. The quality must be estimated as first in the order of nature, and of time, and of pursuit, rather than the quantity. How MUCH, is not the prior question, but WHAT KIND of fruit? It is not every kind, but only that which God approves *good*, which demonstrates the safety of the tree on which it grows. Very much that is bad, will not be accepted—because of its accumulation or amount. Neither will outward deeds and formal services, in which the heart is not engaged and the motive is not good, avail us, because of their quantity. Love is the root both of the graces and the services of the Christain.

Let the spirituality of the revealed system be remembered; making the motive to be morally the whole action in the eye of Omniscience, and rejecting all actions even of outward utility, worship, or beneficence, unless the motive be genuine and holy: when we shall discern also the divine reality and the perfect reasonableness of the system as spiritual, and the folly of all other theories. The absurdity and the meanness of form-

alism will here be seen. Let the depravity of men be remembered, and the doctrine of regeneration by the Spirit of God—without which no *good fruit* ever was, or ever will be, produced. Let us consider these as eternal truths, to which we must conform, since they never can conform to us. And in view of all this, let us trust in the strength of God and devote the rest of our days to the production of that *good fruit* which God will bless!

The passage may be considered as epitomizing and symbolizing, under an appropriate and affecting, yet familiar figure, the whole of the dispensation of the gospel. It may thus enable us to see our true relations to God, and so to *order our conversation aright* that he will *show unto us the salvation of God.* Its great importance in this light, will vindicate the space we have here assigned to its consideration.

SELECTION III.

THE SINGLE EYE AND ITS OPPOSITE

Mat. 6 : 22, 23. *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darknesss!*

In the last sentence, the word *that* is a gloss and an invention of the translators. The exclamation should be—*how great is the darkness!* The Savior refers not to the kind or quality of the darkness, whatever it be; but to its quantity, its totality, its density and perfection. Hence there is no propriety in speaking of *that darkness*, as if he would distinguish it from some other kind of darkness or class of delusions. Besides, in the original there is no *that*, nor any place for it.

The natural light of man is that of his reason, conscience, and other attributes of the soul. If this however is perverted and in ef-

fect extinguished, his mind is as totally devoid of its appropriate light as the body when both the eyes of natural vision are destroyed. Then HOW GREAT *is the darkness!*

Man needs the light of revelation; and when *his eye is single*, that is, when his motive is right, he will acknowledge it, and obey the gospel. He will be patient, careful, scrupulous, teachable, prayerful. When however it is otherwise, "with the talents of an angel, a man may be a fool. If he judges amiss in the supreme point, judging aright in all else but aggravates his folly, as it shows him wrong, though blessed with the best capacity for being right."

SELECTION IV.

CHARITY, CHARITABLE, CHARITABLY

The word *charity*, with its adverb in one instance supplying less properly its place, occurs in our version of the New Testament more than a score of times. The instances are just twenty-two. And what does the word mean, according to the mind of the Spirit; what, in the native sense of divine inspiration? In the Old Testament it is not found.

There were once two related persons, both violent ecclesiastical partisans, inexperienced in the main, but all for bold and thorough measures, and tenacious alike of the same partisan interest. Their way of doing things however was very different. One was bold, aggressive, tumultuary, and full of defiance; the other, oily, insinuating, urbane, and *charitable* as jesuitism personified. O that the former, said one of the injured party to his

friend, were like the latter, so mild, so calm, so condescending, so lovely! That friend rejoined; I cannot say, *amen*, to your wish. Give me the former, for an enemy, or for a theme of eulogy. What if he is furious as Ajax; he is also honest. He displays *the black flag* at his mast head, and then sails into you, with the boldness of an accomplished pirate. The other smiles and smites unseen. With one you know what to anticipate; for he hangs out no false signals, and at all events you neither trust him, nor expect other than you receive. The other shows the friend and acts the foe; concealing his own designs and movements, he will never challenge, but only stab you in a confiding hour *under the fifth rib*. The one is simplicity and transparency; the other, duplicity and ambuscade. The false hierarchy of Rome are described in the apocalypse, as *another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon*. We should execrate the dragon-monster less, if his outward dress *like a lamb* were not assumed to disguise his real character. He must put on the costume of *charity*, in order

to practise more potently the orgies of his selfishness and his malevolence.

The original of the word *charity*, αγαπη, is rendered *love* in four-fifths of the instances, about one hundred and twenty, of its occurrence in the New Testament. O that it had never been rendered otherwise than *love* in any place! Then had it been genuinely transmitted, from *the very words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.* Then had it been intelligible to all readers, according to *the truth as it is in Jesus.* On this account solely, we could wish that the word *charity* had never come into our English Bible! We could desire its extermination, and the substitution every where of the word *love* in the Book of God. Is it any man's interest, more than his duty, to be deceived? Why should I think of things in heaven as they are not? What good can I get by imaginations of falsehood and delusion? O what a world is this of errorists *who hate the light!* The truth remains unchangeable.

The thing meant by the word is as important as the substance of all genuine piety. Such is LOVE. On earth and in heaven, it is

the whole of moral excellence. It is the virtue of virtues in saints and in angels; nay, it is the sum of his moral glory in God himself. *God is love.* It is alike in nature whether in us or in him. We are renewed *in his image; because as He is, so are we in this world.* Hence love is *the end of the commandment, the fulfilling of the law, the bond of perfectness.* It is the substance of all the graces, the soul of all acceptable worship, the motive of all true service; and piety without it as a carcass of hypocrisy. It may be formalism. It may take the million. It may have *a show of wisdom, in will-worship and humility:* but it is not godliness. It may suit party-spirit, in its short-lived and partial views of policy. It may please prelacy, with its false and arrogant pretensions; Oxfordism, with its sophistry and its showy ceremonial; and Rome, the mother of both these, with all the golden cup of her abominations. But it will not suit Heaven. It will not please God. *Without love I am nothing.*

There are two meanings, either of which is frequently attributed to the word *charity*,

in a religious relation; and which, common as they are, are eminently delusive and false. The word in the sacred oracles, has no such meaning as that attributed; from which the true sense is often set in direct separation and solemnly contradistinguished. These two false meanings are not merely points of mistake and speculative error. They are morally evil, both in their causes and their consequences. Men would not adopt or prefer them, if they loved the truth as they ought; and having adopted them, and aided in giving currency to the counterfeits, they are endangered and cheated themselves with their baseness; while, spreading, they infect every where the moral atmosphere and so poison the breath of all by whom it is inhaled.

But we proceed to state these two popular and pernicious errors, in regard to the meaning of the word *charity*, and to show what they are.

1. In reference to alms-giving and pecuniary munificence, it consists in pitying the poor so as to give them what they seem to require, in food, or clothing, or money, or other valuables for the present life. Or, it

consists in giving them tracts, or bibles, or lodgings in hospitals, or whatever they mainly need; or contributing largely for their temporal or spiritual good, either directly meeting their petitions, or virtually, by assisting in the foundation and support of some *charitable* institutions, that aim to benefit their bodies or their souls.

All these outward charities, as they are called, are, we doubt not, less or more, the fruits of Christianity; since they are found in comparative frequency and usefulness in Christian countries alone; and are then most excellent, as well as abundant, where the influence of Christianity is realized in greatest purity and profusion. But the fruits of Christianity are not its vital principle, more than the fruit of a tree is identified with the generous circulating sap that nourished and produced it. These outward things are not *love;* and are often not identified with it, or even allied to it, in the motives of their performers and patrons. A principle of abhorred self-righteousness, or the love of human praise and fame, or the spirit of ostentation, or merely wordly considerations of utility and benefit, or the na-

tural temperament, or some expected pecuniary profit even, may stealthily or otherwise occupy a man and influence all his subserviency to them. Sometimes the motive is worse. Emulation, rivalry, pride, and party-spirit, may often be the spring of a thousand actions and achievements, good in their character, useful in their influence, and as such even overruled and blessed of God. Who knows not that spite, and schism, and party-spirit, can build churches, and even preach with vehemence an ultra-doctrinal orthodoxy? The Reformation was an immense blessing to Great Britain, and so to this country, to posterity and human nature, from the time of its first introduction into that kingdom; but their very graceless king, Henry VIII. when his sword of Cæsar forced its entrance, and coerced to its sway the popish adhesiveness of the Bishops, was not therefore actuated by charity. All such doings of outward beneficence may or may not be good in the end, as they seem in their tendency, to the true interests of men. But the motive that produced them is the great question in the sight of God. And if that motive is wrong, it

will be no benefit to the doer or the helper of them, that they were overruled for benefit to others.

2. The other error of religious aspects and relations, to which we refer, respecting the popular use of the word *charity*, is that which makes it to consist in thinking favorably of all kinds of errorists, viewing them as Christians, if they are only "sincere;" however erroneous, and even if they *deny the Lord that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction:* still, one must think well of them, or *he* is not charitable, *he* has no charity, *he* is no Christian. And this charity has no limits. It is indefinite and silly.

There is such a thing as truth, apart from our perception of it; even as the reality of light in the natural world is not dependent, for its being or its beauty, on the sight or the eye of any man, certainly not of the blind. It is one thing to believe a proposition, and quite another for that proposition to be true. Else there could be no such thing as delusion in the world; or delusion, if it existed, must be always safe, always innocent. There is

no book in the world which speaks so much of *the truth* as the Bible. None, that makes so much of it. It is that in which piety exults and glories. *Charity* REJOICETH *in the truth.* And the truth, in that abstract and comprehensive sense in which the scriptures use it, is the symbol and representative of things. It may be defined—THAT DOCTRINE OF GOD, CONCERNING ALL THE OBJECTS OF RELIGION AND ALL THE THINGS OF HIS KINGDOM, WHICH REPRESENTS THEM, INTRINSICALLY OR RELATIVELY, JUST AS THEY ARE. In this respect then, *the things that are unseen and eternal*, are analogous, or exactly related, to those that are *seen and temporal.* The truth in either case is that which represents them as they are. They pre-exist as independent of the truth that makes them manifest, independent of our perceptions of them before or after the manifestation. The truth, as to the pleasant climates of South America, or the roaring horrors of an eruption of Vesuvius, or the loud 'live thunder' as it 'leaps' from the moving avalanche in Switzerland, the truth in relation to these things is that which represents them as they are. It is just as true, when

disbelieved, or neglected, or unknown, as when understood, and felt, and fully trusted. It is not the truth that makes the things, it only represents them. The truth is strong and incomparable, only because it alone manifests them as they are. And if we cannot see and witness the things ourselves, and yet it is important that we should know them and regulate our conduct according to them, then we are wholly dependent on the truth, and must see them in the truth, or wholly forego their knowledge with all its consequent benefits and advantages. Hence it is not the truth of revelation respecting heaven or hell, that gives reality or being to those invisible localities, or to the relations we sustain to them. They exist as realities whether we know them or not, whether we believe them or not, whether we are favorably or unfavorably related to their awful importance.

In reference to things *seen and temporal*, it is a law, we know, of providence, that our opinions about them can neither change their nature nor at all effect it. If one takes poison for food, under a delusion of its nature, he dies; since his perception of it as it was

not, neither alters its nature, nor, 'sincere' as he may be, secures him from its mortal effects. Sincerity is one thing, rectitude is another. We may sincerely misconceive a thing, by anticipating, or perverting, or contradicting, evidence; and then our sincerity will neither make the thing different, nor exempt us from the damage that may ensue, nor excuse us for one error at the tribunal of God. If we had evidence of the thing as it is, and failed for any guilty cause to appreciate it, our sincerity may be both the offspring and the substance of our sin. Said our Savior to his disciples, *the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you* WILL THINK *that he doeth God service.* Of this class of sincere persecutors was Saul of Tarsus. In his noble answer before Agrippa he ingenuously confesses at once his sincerity and his sin. I VERILY THOUGHT WITH MYSELF, THAT I OUGHT TO DO *many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth: which thing I also did in Jerusalem. And many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And*

I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even into strange cities. He was a great exscinder——but not after his conversion.

Here was a man, who, in an evil and an impious course, with full sincerity, thought himself to be religiously right, as the servant of God; and this, when persecuting Christ in his members, and *breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.* He was wrong, and he ought to have known it. It was a sin of ignorance, because he knew not the right way; but it was distinguished sin, notwithstanding, because he might have known better. His ignorance was his sin and so was his sincerity. He had the means of knowledge, but his presumption would rather anticipate than use them. *But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. Howbeit* FOR THIS CAUSE *I obtained mercy, that in me first* [chief, that is, with eminence and distinction] *Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to those who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

Now, charity is love; and love is an exercise of the mind, in which, according to the law of God, we breathe good will or benevolence towards the persons of all men, while we delight only in what is right. Must we then contradict evidence, or deceive ourselves, to think better of a man than he is manifested to be? Ought we to aid his self-deception? Nay, is it not an office of love itself to show him the truth, to endeavor his correction, and to influence him to come cordially to the knowledge of God and of himself? That all men are by nature voluntary transgressors of the law of God, so that *there is none that doeth good, no, not one;* that regeneration or a radical change of heart is indispensable to salvation, as it is also indispensable to all genuine piety and all true virtue; that there are certain plain, and ordinarily discernible evidences of this great moral change, wherever it actually exists; and that ignorance of God, indifference to his cause, superficial and light views of religion, vain and airy sentiments of piety, changeful predilections and fastidious feelings in regard to it, and above all, the presence of positive error,

menacing sometimes the very basis of *the glorious gospel of the blessed God*, that these are respectively or collectively no evidences of regeneration, which is the ultimate bound of the circle, which in the sight of God includes all Christians; all these are palpable scriptural facts, reasonable, cardinal, capable of the clearest proof, and denied only by *men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.* Yet if one holds them, he is not charitable! He must contradict God, in order to show charity to men!

Why not rather have some charity for God? Why not do him the merest piece of justice, in the world, to believe his word? *It is impossible for God to lie. He cannot deny himself. Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar. The foolishness of God is wiser than men. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?* What shall be the adequate succedaneum for the truth?

These two errors, an indiscriminate confidence in all religious professors or pretenders, and an outward beneficence or usefulness irrespective of the motive, as ordinarily covered by the nominal guise of *charity*, are then absurdities and fallacies, for which Scripture is not accountable and which belong to Christianity only as perversely does any other of its humanizing corruptions. Charity, that is *love, rejoiceth in the truth.* If so, charity has eyes; and makes discriminations, as well as inferences. *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity—have not love, it profiteth me nothing.* Charity then is another thing than such sacrifices for the poor, another thing than burning at the stake like a martyr; since a man may do all this, or any other outward service, near the altars of God or in the deserts of the world, and yet have no charity, no love.

The distinction of genuine love as twofold, that of benevolence and that of complacency, is sound, philosophical, eternal. The object of the former is being, in all the par-

ticulars or individuals of our knowledge, our social relations, and our personal intercourse, We love their happiness, we wish well to their persons, we care for their interests; that is, we regard them sincerely with the love of benevolence; and this, even when they are unworthy and sinful.

The object of the latter is truth and excellence, or whatever is properly the object of approbation, desire, delight. Hence, we regard with the love of complacency all the moral perfections of God, and whatever in creatures resembles them by conformity or affinity. But we can take, if we are right, no complacency in what is wrong, none in error, none in sin, none in folly. How spurious and vicious that charity that does not abhor what is evil! Complacency regards character with delight, so far as it is good. Benevolence desires the happiness of persons, their best and their ultimate happiness, even when, on account of sin, they can be no objects at all of complacency. And to exercise complacency and benevolence on all objects respectively proper, is to exemplify a character well disciplined, as well as truly en-

lightened and rightly charitable. This, we take it, is the main thought of the Apostle in his excellent prayer for his Phillippian converts; *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may* APPROVE [DISCRIMINATE] THINGS THAT ARE EXCELLENT; *that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.*

In closing this chapter, we venture the remark of the great importance of substituting the word *love* for *charity* wherever the latter occurs; and that for want of this change in our English version, thousands and millions have been led to mistake the nature of the thing intended by the term; and so led to misconceive grandly the nature of piety, and quite too probably to rest in a false peace and an alienated practice, to the final undoing of their souls. We repeat the remark that the word *charity* ought to be superseded by the word *love*, wherever the former occurs in the New Testament. The former is ambiguous, generic, illusory. And

the mass of readers are wont to take, and practically to prefer, the wrong sense to the right one—or some one of the inferior senses to that which is alone right, as it is also superior and incomparable. The word LOVE, on the other hand, is intelligible, definite, spiritual, genuine. It is moreover the only correct translation of the original *αγαπη*; nor can we conceive what reason influenced the translators of King James, on a principle apparently arbitrary and reasonless, to render the word right and proper in four fifths of the instances of its occurrence, and then to give, to the remaining fifth, a vocable so diluent and tame, for its improper representative in English. Nor can the word be considered of small importance which expresses the whole of the moral attributes of God, the sum and substance of all moral excellence and true piety in man. Perhaps the semi-popery of the age, and the romanizing idea of *chăr-ity*, may best account for the rendering we blame, and which in the times of the Tudors, and even of the Stuarts, as indeed in our own times, does so great an injury to souls, as it so darkens and attenuates the nature of piety.

SELECTION V.

THE GOSPEL HID

2 Cor. 4 : 3, 4. *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost : in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

THERE seems some difficulty in this text. *To them that are lost*—how lost? In answering this question there appears to be a mistake somewhere with all commentators and all preachers, who undertake its elucidation. Men may be said to be lost in three ways; as sinners in general, as abandoned of God, and as imprisoned in hell.

1. In the first sense, we are all lost, as fallen and apostate, as condemned and obnoxious, as incapable in any sense of making an atonement or of dispensing with that of Christ, as ill deserving and salvable by *the unsearchable riches of Christ* alone. As such

only are any of us the appropriate objects of the mission and the passion of the Redeemer; *For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

2. As abandoned of God, men are emphatically lost. *If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.—Yea, wo also to them when I depart from them!* There is such a state, and many are now in it. They are left to themselves and they will perish forever.

3. Men are lost consummately and finally, when, ceasing to be *prisoners of hope* as ordinarily in this world, they become prisoners of despair in that which is to come.

Now, in which of these three senses—for we know not of a fourth—refers the text *to them that are lost?* not in the third sense, certainly: for they live on the earth.

Is it then to the second? we think not: for all men are mainly blinded, in different degrees and forms, before they are regenerated, as we all know. Those who commonly assume this second sense of the word *lost*, are wont to contradict themselves awkward-

ly, in the application, they make to the ungodly and the blinded, as if they might be encouraged to look and live. What! when abandoned of God? If they might, then are they not abandoned. And what preacher has not either exemplified this inconsistency so as to have it seen or felt by others, or so as to be conscious of perpetrating some constraint upon the truth himself.

Well, is it in the first sense of the word *lost*, that we are to take the apostle? Is it as sinners in general, that he refers to the *lost?* We answer, no, in no wise. For there is an emphasis in the words of our version, which that idea does not reach, and without which there appears to be next to no sense in the words of the apostle. And who is farther than Paul, we should say, than God, from the tame, the vague, the vapid, or the unphilosophical, in the style of his inculcations!

We prefer a different translation, or rather we prefer either one of two others, to that of our common version; as more according to the grammar of the original, the scope of the passage, the truth of things, the common

sense of hearers, and the ends of preaching. For this however we must refer briefly to the context, as well as to the original; from verse twelfth of the previous chapter.

Paul is here speaking of the evangelical ministry, and contrasting it, favorably and honorably with that of Moses, *who put a veil over his face*, as the symbol of the comparative darkness of that preliminary and shadowy dispensation. He shows too that there is another and a worse veil *on the hearts* of the poor Israelites *even unto this day, when Moses is read; which veil is done away in Christ.* Christianity is ultimate and substantive, showing the things themselves which previous dispensations typified with comparative obscurity, if not ambiguity or vagueness. Accordingly, the Christian ministry, are wont to radiate a full reflection of Christ on the minds of men. They *use great plainness of speech;* that is, they are intelligible, perspicuous, full and clear, neither deal they in fraud, or duplicity, or equivocation, or concealment, of any sort; but honestly and sincerely, *by manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

And what, must we think, is the consequence? Certainly, that all men see the light and rejoice in it, in accordance with the fulness of its objective manifestations. But alas! such is not the fact. The gospel is still hid to many, and was even when Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or John, was the competent and faithful preacher. What is the reason? The text is properly introduced to show the reason; and we give it here in the dress of its paraphrased

FIRST TRANSLATION.

If however the veil is found on the gospel, notwithstanding, I will show you how it comes there; it is veiled by means of perishable things allowed to intervene, by which things the god of this world hath blinded the perceptions of the unbelieving, so that the radiation of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, might not illumine them.

The word rendered *hid* in our version, is *veiled*, κεκαλυμμενον; and the allusion is so continuous, and so identical, to what he had just said about the veil on the face of Moses, that plainly it is a pity the word *hid* was ever put

there, by which the figure is rendered invisible and the sense is *hid* unnecessarily and injuriously. We must think of the gospel as pouring a flood of light on the earth; and then of a veil interposed; and that veil constituted or woven of things that perish—just such things as palpably absorb the minds of millions, where the gospel is by them neglected rather than scorned, every day. Wealth, pleasure, fame, are the trinity, says Dr. Griffin, of the world's adoration; and while these occupy the mind, they make a veil opaque that puts the sun of righteousness itself relatively under a total eclipse. They cannot see God, or duty, or the way of life, or the beauty of evangelical truth, or the excellency of things divine, or the necessity of flying from the wrath which is to come, or rightly any other doctrine of revelation.

We have heard an anecdote in point. It is said the late eloquent and excellent Robert Hall, was once engaged in conversation with two intelligent men, one of whom was not, and the other was, a Christian. Their topic was piety; and with the latter he was ever at an agreement, but with the former, not,

who was a money-driving merchant. Whenever Mr. Hall arrived in his reasonings at a conclusion implying the criminality of unbelief, his unconverted friend objected; 'No, sir. I can't see it; I doubt that, sir; how can it be? That strikes me as not so clear,' and the like; till Mr. Hall, justly indignant at the real prevarication, and willing to make a special effort to convince him that the difficulty was all of his own making, interposed in an extraordinary way. He took from his pocket his pencil and a gold sovereign; then he wrote G O D on his thumb-nail; 'There, my friend,' said he, 'can you see that?' 'O yes,' he rejoined. Mr. Hall then put the coin over it, and it was completely hid; interrogating him, 'Can you see it now, sir?' 'No, certainly,' was the answer. Mr. Hall replied, 'Well, my friend, the fact is as you say. But do you know the reason? It is the same here and in higher relations. Remember then—when you cannot see God, it is because gold is in the way.' He then left him to digest the application with his own conscience.

The words translated *to them that are lost*

are εν τοις απολλυμενοις, and they may grammatically refer to persons, places, or things. In the first translation they are referred to things: —the things that perish make the veil, that hides the gospel and blinds the perceptions of the faithless. This is surely grammar, sense, and truth; even if possibly it be not the native meaning, identically and to a shade, of the original. If our version however were the true, it would better accord with the Greek, if the preposition εν were omitted, and the dative absolute conjoined with the verb *hid* or veiled; of this we have an example in 1 Cor. 1: 18, where the same word is so used. *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God.* Here *those that perish and those that are saved* are both expressed absolutely in the dative plural; and the preposition there would be as much in our way, as it is now, awkwardly enough for the common version, in the passage we are considering. But if the preposition is to be recognised in the translation, and if the participle refers to things instead of persons, then

our first translation is the true one beyond all candid and lucid dispute.

But some may prudentially prefer the personal view; and while we do not prefer it, we admit that possibly it may be the right view: let the intelligent reader judge for himself. We give then, literally,

THE SECOND TRANSLATION.

If notwithstanding the gospel we preach be veiled, it is veiled in them that perish; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the perceptions of the unbelieving, so that the radiation of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, might not illumine them.

We prefer the former, as more natural, more congruous with the figure, more complete, more descriptive of the way of it, more useful and convincing, and perhaps more excellent in all relations. The words εν τοις, εν οις, may refer to things, as well as persons, every scholar knows. The examples are many.

The phrase *the God of this world* is peculiar and even unique. Our Savior says twice *the prince of this world*, John, 14 : 30. 16 : 11.

But here the words are entirely different; ὁ αρχων του κοσμου τουτου, while in the text alone it is, ὁ θεος του αιωνος τουτου. The latter might be rendered *the God of this age* or this state of things, as contradistinguished from eternity. And here the phrase may be interpreted in a two-fold way; not theologically opposed or inconsistent; but to be compared with enlightened choice in the *manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

It may refer personally and formally to the devil; since he is now enthroned morally by the rebels, the apostates, that populate and constitute the world, the age, and the character of this present state. In this sense, it is used as our Master uses *the prince of this world;* and as the grand adversary is elsewhere described, as *the Dragon, that Old Serpent, who is the devil and Satan, who deceiveth the whole world.*

The other sense is that of *this world worshipped as God,* or put in the place of God, by being supremely loved, and served, and sought, in all things. And what is more common? or what would better carry out the

figure? If a gold sovereign, when put near the eye, may veil the universe from our sight, surely the world interposed may eclipse the sun and darken the minds of those who dwell voluntarily in its shadow. As professors of Christianity, we are morally married to God; and he, as our husband, claims of us the rights of conjugal fidelity and cordial attachment. He accordingly resents our spiritual infidelities in a way of holy and indignant reprehension; *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* We conclude with the specimen of

A THIRD TRANSLATION.

But if our gospel be veiled, it is veiled by the things that perish; by which things, this world, worshipped in place of God, hath blinded the perceptions of the faithless, so that the radiation of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, might not enlighten them.

SELECTION VI.

TAKING THEM WITH GUILE

THE difference between the true rendering of the text, and the false and common view of it, is very great; as great as that between a Jesuit, who practises on the principle that 'the end sanctifies the means;' or that 'it is lawful to do evil that good may come,' or that pious frauds are the most pious things in Christendom, and a minister of Christ who copies the holiness of his master. We quote—

2. Cor. 12 : 16. *But be it so, I did not burden you; nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.*

The Apostle is here using the language of his enemies. As if he had said, "I know what the false teachers say of me at Corinth. They accuse me of cunning, and management, and fraudulent duplicity. They say I sordidly cheated you. But you, my friends, know

better than to believe them. Did I ever any thing like this? *Did I make a gain of you* in person, or *by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you,* any more than I did? Nay, *walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?* Wherefore, let a calumny so impious be treated by you as it plainly deserves. For you all know that *guile* had nothing to do with my personal or official action among you."

Often has the writer been afflicted, sometimes in high places, to see ministers of Christ, and even Doctors in Divinity, mistaking this text, and using their blunder to sanction their own double-dealing. No names are to be mentioned, only the truth shall be manifested. But there is one passage of history, so memorable, so apposite, and so true, and which the writer is competent to attest as a veritable as well as an instructive fact, that he ventures thus to illustrate his theme with its narration.

A company of clerical friends were once dining in London, some of them names of distinction; say ten or twelve of the metro-

polis, and three or four others from the United States of America. Towards the end of the friendly and well enjoyed banquet, the conversation turned on the appropriate qualities of the ministry, British and American. The comparisons were not odious; but generous rather, philosophical, and intended mainly for information and mutual improvement.

At last a London minister, who had traveled and seen something of the world, remarked, as follows:

'With all their excellencies, however, they have also their defects in America. There is one which I am disposed to mention as rather distinguished. Our American friends will, I trust, receive it kindly, and entertain it with their characteristic magnanimity.'

Here the Americans looked at each other, waiting for the thunder of an accusation which no one could particularly anticipate; and it was all the more embarrassing to the entire circle, from the form and gravity of its introduction, the mutual cordiality that preceded, and the blind apprehension alike of all the auditory. The speaker continued:

'I scarcely know what to call the quality

I am about to censure; but truly I view it as the great characteristic fault of your American preachers. And I think as truly, that, in its opposite, the London ministry as much excel. Instead however of naming our quality, or their defect as not possessing it, I will describe it in a legitimate way; by citing the example of *the very chiefest of the Apostles.* Paul is our paragon, and at Corinth he was a city minister. Writing to that church, he tells them, *I caught you with guile.* Now, that management, that address, that prudential manner of administration, to which the Apostle refers, is the identical quality, I think, in which we London ministers excel, and which you American ministers distinguishingly want.'

'You are really in earnest then, my friend,' replied an American at the table.

'O certainly,' was the answer. 'I mean just as I speak.'

'Let us glance then,' continued the American, 'at the matter. Did you ever look at the original word there rendered *guile?* You surely know that *dolos* means fraud, dishonesty, cheating; that it is used in the New

Testament often, but never in a good sense; that it is incapable of a good sense, as really as *diabolos*,* with which indeed its signification is allied; that its possession is incongruous to the character of *an Israelite indeed*, as says our blessed Savior himself'—

'Hold! my dear friend,' exclaimed the Londoner, 'you will condemn the Apostle Paul.'

'O no!' rejoined the American, rehearsing the text ironically, as Paul used it, and making its sense appear to the conviction of all. The London accuser blushed at his own signal defeat; when the learned and Reverend Professor H—— of the London University, took up the topic, substantially as follows: For shame, London! It is high time for us to *renounce the hidden things of dishonesty and 'guile;' not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth* imitate our American brethren, *commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* For one, I thank you for correcting our mistake. So I see that, among other odd practices, you have

* Devil.

one, of which we London ministers are all too clear, that of consulting and actually studying your Greek Testament. Stick to that, sirs, and your example will be increasingly excellent. You will correct London ministers and all the world beside. Away henceforth with dolos, diabolos, and all that sympathy. And you, my London brother, you will *take them with guile*, I think, no more!

Jesuitism may suit Rome, Oxford, and some other of the *apostatical* succession, whose tendencies are all towards Italy and the dark ages. But dishonesty of all kinds will never suit God, who is of all beings infinitely the most veracious and the most sincere. Hence how worthy is he of that confidence, which he not more demands, than deserves from us all. And we are eternally how safe in it! There is one sin, which, as such, is too often exemplified by the clergy in their ex-officio performances; it is the sin of misquoting scripture, either the words wrong, or the sense wrong, or the use wrong, and so the effect wrong, through negligence or haste or

a vicious and indolent habit; and sometimes by merely doing as others do.

As to the London ministers generally, while we know, and admire, and revere, many, and especially some of them, and since comparisons have been instituted, we may act Elihu and also *show our opinion.* In general then it is, that with all their bookishness and tact, with all their address and skill of manners, with all their well seen gentility and courteous ease, with all their real learning and we trust, real piety, they do not understand their Bibles better than the evangelical ministry of America, nor preach on the whole as pure and full a gospel, nor impress and individualize their hearers as powerfully, nor answer the great ends of preaching as well in arresting the attention of men to the things of God, or in stating and enforcing the truth, or in *converting the sinner from the error of his ways.*

We suppose that they less understand the pure theology of the word of God; are less thorough, orderly, symmetrical, and methodical, in their intelligence of the revealed system; and this we say of the evangelical

ministry of the metropolis and of the whole Island, apart from the church of England, not without recollecting exceptions and supposing more that we do not recollect. As for the church of England as a body, we verily believe, that, apart from its mound of political and national influence against the outbursts of infidelity and the plottings of popery, the real orthodoxy and general piety of the whole hierarchy, and by consequence of the total laity, are most marvellously overrated every where. The truly pious are comparatively the ignoble few, called the 'evangelical faction,' are uninfluential and scarcely tolerated, are not in the road to preferment, are the theme and the mark of sneers and contumely, and are like tropical plants in artificial closures of the north, out of their proper element, of sickly and stunted growth, and instinctively panting for those gardens of paradise which they are never to re-visit in this world. Instead of a thousand proofs of this—witness the contempt and scorn of their Arminian hierarchy* in general for Dr.

* The whole numerical hierarchy of the Anglican Establishment is rated, by that excellent and compe-

Scott's most excellent Commentary. Those *perpauci* who read and love it, are generally too prudent to let it be known—especial-

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tent judge, the late Rev. Legh Richmond, an Episcopalian and one of them, at 18,000, from the Archbishop of Canterbury, with his salary of 370 dollars a day, (or $135,000 a year and more than $15 dollars every hour of his life,) down, by all the steps and orders of the clerical pyramid, supported at its base by so many half-starved curates, to every shadow of a clerk that has had the forms of ordination passed on him; and of these 18,000, Mr. Richmond deliberately supposes that there are perhaps 1600 sincerely pious men! What a ratio! And 16,400——'But where will they find the 1600? It is entirely a too liberal allowance;' said an excellent London Pastor.

Some of our countrymen, finding the pious few—a few of them, agreeably, in their company when abroad, make a charitable mistake in favor of the clergy, as if they were all as pious, all like them—specimens, or as if the rule was not rather logically confirmed by its rare exceptions! As well might a man, who has eaten one or two comfortable meals, each in a far-selected oasis of the Desert of Arabia, report that the whole peninsula was neither Desert, nor Stony, but a perfect Felix of verdure and fertility, from the shores of Mare Mortuum to the Straits of Babel Mandel. We have heard ourselves the miserable preaching of Curates, Rectors, Bishops, without enough of evangelical truth communicated—or probably known by the preacher—to direct any poor sinner there in the way of heaven.

ly to their diocesan. The pride and state and ambition of prelacy, its arrogance, and its exclusiveness, its earthliness and secularity, are pervading and ascendant; while Puseyism is spreading in a congenial atmosphere, and inclining, like flowers towards the

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Arminianism of the most loose and flashy sort, is wedded to Prelacy the world over; and then, with the shameful and silly falsehood of Baptismal regeneration, the popish arrogance of exclusive 'authority' resulting from the foolery of 'apostolical succession,' a good fat salary, professional indolence, the pride of aristocracy, and the sense of official magistracy as connected—not particularly with Heaven, but—with the State, these earthly things, with pluralism, simony, ceremony, ostentatious ease, and bought sermons, illustrate what Cowper and multitudes of the wise and good have often described them, so commonly, to be! With themselves and perhaps millions of the people, the influence of the Establishment is blinding and worldly alone; a mere political fungus on the sword of majesty or the sceptre of power.

Many of their clergy utterly scout the idea of a change of heart as requisite to salvation; what preachers these!—and are viewed, by our enlightened Christians, who know them, as mere hirelings, without the experience or even the sober pretence of real piety! God protect this country forever, from the tender mercies of an Establishment and all that appertains to it! In these times, such a prayer is opportune.

sun, in the direction of Rome, steady and stealthy, as towards the glory of its rejoicing, the home of its affinities, and the kebla* of its formalism and its devotions. *O my soul, come not thou into their secret! unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united.* One may more and more thank God, that he is a protestant, a puritan, and hopefully a Christian!

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* KEBLA, among the eastern nations, signifies the point of the heavens towards which they directed their worship. The Jews did it toward the Temple at Jerusalem; the Mohammedans towards Mecca; the Sabians toward the Meredian; and the Magians toward the rising sun. See I Kings, 8: 44, 48. Daniel, 6: 10. Ps. 5: 7. 28: 2. Jonah, 2: 4. For the proper KEBLA of Christians, see Heb. 12: 2.

SELECTION VII.

WHAT JESUS SAYS IS TRUE

John, 14: 2. *In my father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.*

THE last moiety of the text ought to be rendered, not as here indicatively and declaratively, but interrogatively and appellantly. Our blessed Savior is comforting his disciples in near prospect of his departure, and he is reproving affectionately their want of steady and equal faith in his word. He says, *Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God; believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, would I have told you?* As if he had said, 'If it were not as I have said, would I ever have said it? Would I, think you, speak what is not so? Your unbelief impeaches your Savior's truth. Yet, think who I am. Is it my way to deceive men, especially my

own loved disciples? Am I *crafty*, or do I attempt to *take you with guile?* My words are truth only; for your safety, your wisdom, your consolation, then, believe them cordially; and know that I am that *Amen*, that *faithful and true witness*, who cannot be deceived, and who would not deceive.'

As it stands in our version, it is at best obscure and of difficult interpretation. It seems also absurd. *If it were not so, I would have told you;* that is, if there had been nothing there, I should have made a full report about it. If there had been no *mansions*, no *father's house*, no *place for you, I would have told you* all about—nothing. As interrogatively rendered, the sense is clear. It is in keeping with the whole scope of the context. It is of admirable use. Grammar and sense sanction it.

It is on the testimony and veracity of our Lord Jesus Christ, that our faith, and so our duty, rests. All we believe of God, of man, and of futurity, depends on his word about them. We believe heaven, hell, judgment, eternity, the resurrection of the dead, regeneration, the work of Christ, the offer of mercy through

his blood, the influence of the Spirit, *the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, the divine purposes and promises, and all the universe of related objects, on the testimony of our Savior and our God. And whenever we may feel tempted to disbelieve any of *the true sayings of God*, let us pause—let us remember that Jesus is looking at us—that soon we shall stand at his judgment-seat—that he appeals to us against our unbelief, and in honor of his veracity, saying, *If it were not so, would I have told you?* WOULD I HAVE TOLD YOU?

It is a grief and an astonishment to the enlightened Christian to see, as a feature of this mature and self-complacent age, that the religion of many has to do with *the testimony of Jesus* so sparingly, and that mainly or only at second hand. Human authority is preferred to divine. What great men say, a great many of them, a whole hemisphere of stars—in parliament or convocation assembled, or what councils have enacted, or tradition attested, or the fathers thought, or some other form of human rubbish, ancient or modern, piled like pyramids on pyramids

or mountains on mountains, and by which *the gospel*—no wonder—*is hid*, what some stereotyped oracles of legitimate idolatry have told us, is all the rule, and all the piety, and all the glory of thousands! While, *what Jesus has told us* is reverently honored with a bow of the head, at a safe distance, and left serenely to the faith of those bewildered men, who follow him alone, and are so out of 'the church,' and abandoned by its downy doctors to all the damnation of 'uncovenanted mercies.'

SELECTION VIII.

PURGING ALL MEATS

Mark, 7: 19. *Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats.*

THE sense of the latter clause is certainly obscure, if we may judge from the variety of glosses that have been put on it by learned and distinguished men. We propose a safe and easy rendering, by some supplemental words, from the conviction that the phrase is elliptical and consequently requires them. 'It is common to every language,' says Dr. Campbell, 'to express the part by the whole and the species by the genus;' and so conversely, the whole by the part, and the genus by the species. 'This kind of synechdoche is so familiar, and even so strictly proper, as hardly to deserve a place among the tropes.' The figure of ellipsis too is not only very common in all languages, but is sometimes so

insidious, sometimes so abrupt, in its occurrence, that, in the one instance, we are not aware of it, and in the other, too perplexed or confounded to understand it. We would paraphrase the text, at large, as seems necessary, thus;

It is not that which entereth into a man objectively, from without, that has power morally to pollute him, or that can make him sin, or attach sin to him; since it has no contact with his heart, the seat of all moral quality and character; but passeth off through the intestines in the regular course of nature. It is that which cometh out of a man, that morally pollutes him; since this proceedeth from his heart, expresses the sin that he cherishes there, and so defiles and degrades his whole person. Wherefore, your ceremonial distinctions of meats, as if it were sin to eat one sort, and righteousness to eat another, are by this doctrine either abrogated or nullified, as arbitrary and fallacious, having no foundation in truth; thus our doctrine teaches, καθαριζον παντα βρωματα, *purging* or morally cleansing all meats, and rendering these superstitious distinctions void: since

every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the Word of God, authoritatively setting it apart for our use; *and by prayer* for his blessing when we partake of it. Wherefore let no man *command* others *to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of those who believe and know the truth.* Compare Mat. 15: 15–20. with the context, Mark 7: 18–23. 1 Tim. 4: 3–5. and Rom. 14: 14 where Paul says, *I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself:* thus again *purging* or making clean *all meats.*

The whole of religion is well divided into two grand departments, called objective and subjective. The former respects every thing in religion viewed mentally in any way as an object, whether to be perceived, considered, contemplated, obeyed, avoided, approved, abhorred, believed, disbelieved, loved, hated, followed, or renounced. Every thing, which, from without, may affect us objectively, for good or for evil, belongs to what we mean by the objective class: while the subjective

refers to any or all of our affections, exercises, actions, or relations, as consequent on objective influence. Thus, God in all his offices and relations, the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed to us in the scriptures, heaven, hell, truth, the offer of mercy, every testimony, every promise, every threatening, these are all religious objects; while adoration, trust, obedience, hope, and all the exercises and feelings of piety, and all the Christian graces, are subjective, as they occur in the subject, and respect our personal acts, thoughts, and duties.

Now the text teaches that nothing objective can morally defile us, except as it is approved or appropriated by the heart; and nothing merely physical or material. Hence our Lord Jesus Christ, as man, was conversant objectively with all the developments of sin in this world; this was a part of his constant probation, as it is also ours; but he never made them his own by subjective approbation or allowance, and they could not in the least defile him. Neither can it morally defile a man to eat any thing; since this action, as such, affects only his animal

nature, not his heart. And hence intrinsically the forbidden fruit was not sin, nor was it at all deleterious or hurtful, but rather was it delightfully the reverse. All the sin consisted in disobedience to God. And since, under the Christian dispensation especially, all *meats* are lawful to us, to use, not to abuse them, Christ has *purged* or cleansed them *all*, that we may receive them with thankfulness; and so he has abrogated all the ceremonial uncleanness of the Jewish code, whether Mosaic or rabbinical.

The distinction between what is objective and what is subjective in the whole of religion, is so important to all sound, discriminating, and symmetrical views of truth and duty, that we commend it, especially to the young reader, to be pondered, digested, and retained, for future use. Beside, the objective should always precede the subjective, and control it; otherwise, instead of order, truth, soberness, and wisdom, in our religion, giving the precedence to subjective religion, our feelings, our imaginations, our wild or sickly impressions, nay, our very dreams, and even the

deceitful suggestions of the devil, may control our piety and nullify the word of God, introducing any fanciful or fanatical substitute for *the truth as it is in Jesus.*

SELECTION IX.

AGONIZE TO ENTER AT THE STRAIT GATE

LUKE, 13: 24. *And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

CAMPBELL renders it thus: 'Force your entrance through the strait gate; for many, I assure you, will request to be admitted, who shall not prevail.'

Macknight adopts the common version unaltered, and glosses it in his running commentary with substantial correctness, but without seeming to see what the English text needs in order to a genuine expression of the sense.

Scott comments with his general force and piety, but is defective in the same way.

So Hammond and others of his age.

Beza renders the preceptive part after Cal-

vin and the Vulgate, but substitutes 'studebunt' for 'quaerent' in what follows.

The comments of Calvin on verse 24, seem to have led the whole protestant world as to its meaning, and not to have well succeeded in displaying the perfect sense of the Savior. He says, Hoc ideo additum est ne spes inanis nos frustretur, acsi nos juvaret comitum multitudo. nam, ut sibi libenter blanditur caro, multi facilem aditum ad vitam sibi promittunt, qui sibi interea quidvis indulgent. Ita alii alios mutuo decipiunt, ut indormiant pravae securitati. Tales delicias ut suis excutiat Christus, exclusum iri pronunciat qui jam sibi addicunt certam vitae possessionem.

Admiring the wise and faithful piety that ever characterizes this Prince of the Reformers, we render his words as follows:

This is added by the Savior, lest any should be disappointed by cherishing an empty hope, as if they could find some advantage in delusion merely from the multitude of their companions. For, since the self-blandishments of the flesh are ever ready and spontaneous, many promise themselves an easy entrance to salvation, requiring no striving or agonizing

to secure it; while in the mean time they indulge themselves in every gratification they desire. In this way they mutually deceive each other, that they may perpetuate their common sleep of criminal security. Christ however would thoroughly arouse his own from these perilous delights; and hence he pronounces that they shall be excluded who now flatter themselves with the possession of life, when they never have truly made its acquisition, or practically deprecated a failure, or shown any proper efforts of *striving to enter at the narrow gate* of regeneration and genuine piety.

Doddridge follows suit in the same strain, but with an approximation to the true reading. His note on the text is excellent. "The *Prusian version* renders it *shall try* or *attempt* but I apprehend from the context, that it refers to importunate *entreaties* when they were actually excluded, rather than to feeble *attempts* now; though it is an awful truth that these likewise shall be unsuccessful." Here is the germ of the true rendering!

Our own honored and eloquent Dr. Griffin has given us a noble and excellent sermon on

this passage, No. XIII, see his MEMOIR, from the real excellence and power of which it grieves a personal friendship even to seem to detract a particle. Still, it proceeds on a demonstrable misapprehension of the native sense of the text. This is a real infelicity, for which all the whole constellation of other appropriate qualities of a great preacher, however well exemplified, cannot perfectly atone. It is a fundamental blemish in a sermon, however comparatively great and good in all other respects. A due reverence for the Word of God, especially that part of it which we have ourselves on any occasion selected, as the basis and the sanction of all our subordinate ministrations in his name, imperiously requires, that, as a wise master-builder and a true message-bearer, every minister of his word should convey to the people its true meaning, its own identical native sense. To do this fallaciously, to fail to do it at all, to give some other sense of our own, to mistake its meaning through inadvertency or indolence, or even to accommodate it arbitrarily and without due notice of the aberration, and due apology for it, is often censurable and inju-

rious in a very high degree. No man now on earth would more cordially respond to these observations, than those noble master-spirits of piety, now in heaven, to whom they at present apply.

The infelicity that obscures the sense seems to have been occasioned by false punctuation in the original, and to have been perpetuated by the same fault transmitted in the common English version, as well as in other versions of the living languages of Europe. The evils thence resulting are many and great, so that the mistake has become a proof-text with some hard-pushed disputants, to establish their own errors and nullify or obstruct the evangelical duties of men.* Of this

* One good brother, some years ago, when the controversy raged about the ability or the inability of accountable man, preached a quietus sermon to the whole subject, from this very excellent and often abused passage. It was marvellously satisfactory to many who walked in *the sparks which it had kindled;* and perhaps quite as much so to his own orthodox equanimity. It was strained thus: 'Here, my brethren, the whole question is decided, and that by the highest authority too, the Lord himself. Such a preacher of inability was our blessed Lord. *They seek to enter*, says he, *and they are not able.* What

more hereafter. The fault is here—a period after the word *able* at the end of the verse, a bad division of verses cutting improperly the sense, and a miserable detachment of the following vitally allied verses, as if they were a new paragraph and a new argument; instead of a continuity of one and the same unbroken train of thought, and that among the most compact, consecutive, naturally allied, awfully picturesque, and solemnly momentous, that were ever uttered even by the Savior himself! There ought to be either no

is this but the doctrine of human inability? It is too plain for argument. The Savior has for ever decided it. Only believe.'

So plain have thousands beside him made it, in their own way, and to their own devout approbation. We say no more—except that if the public 'only believe,' what all the sincere advocates of imbecility and paralysis venture to make 'too plain for argument,' they can have their faith fed by wholesale! Neither preacher, nor hearer, in such cases, ever thinks of the native sense, never searches for it, never values it, and never finds it. In the meantime their blunders, dreams, and drivel, are let off, on an edified and congenial auditory, for the very super-quintessence of piety, orthodoxy, and wisdom. O what innovators and suspectably heretical ones are they who seek for the native sense and find it! What a crime against pious stupidity!

point at all, or merely a questionable comma, at the end of the verse; the context ought to be viewed as a whole from verse 23 to 30 inclusive; and the question and answer should be heeded in a natural way, entire, as if we had been present with the Savior and the scene, and as if we had attentively listened to it all with a devout pious conviction that the Son of God was speaking to us! The importance, the interest and the grandeur of the whole passage, thus properly appreciated, are overwhelming, infinite, eternal!

And now, all dross removed, heaven's own pure day,
Full on the confines of our ether flames.

The Savior seems at this time to have been in hither Galilee, moving slowly, and conversing with the people that thronged in a crowded attendance around him, as *he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.* In that slaughter-house of the prophets, he intended to appear exactly at the right time, neither too late nor too early, to *accomplish his decease* as it was written of him, *the just for the*

unjust, that he might bring us to God. What a paragon—like itself alone—of the moral sublime!

At a suitable moment, a question was propounded to him, before all, and which seemed to interest the multitude. *Then said one to him, Lord, are the saved few?*

This was the question, to which the Savior returned so appropriate, so instruuctive, and so practical an answer. The motives of the querist we know not. Possibly he spake indeliberately, and because awed by the doctrine of Christ, as if suddenly impressed with the fact, as a consequence, that few only would be saved. Perhaps it was malignant, wishing to prejudice the minds of the hearers against him as 'damnation preacher;' a mean artifice often practised against his faithful servants in our times! It might have been captious, as fault-finding and designed to bring him into public controversy; another disingenuous style of diverting the truth from its just application to ourselves. It was more probably indevout and curious, desiring to take the census of the species, and compare the aggregates of lost and

saved. Many waste their precious time in these impracticable speculations, and injure their souls by the evil and dilatory habit of religious trifling which it induces. But the question was capable of a most practical bearing! If one thinks, that, of living adults, it is the rule that the vast majority are saved, it may be dangerous error; it may—generate sloth, presumption, and an impious calculation of chances in our own favor. If one thinks that the majority are probably lost, at least in previous ages and to the present inclusively, it may proportionately enliven his *diligence to make his own calling and election sure.* Hence the Savior assures him, that, whether the saved at last shall be comparatively few or not, the lost are "many." And the duty hence arising to ourselves is immediately to make sure or effectuate our own entrance to the kingdom, while we may, while the door is open! The answer of the Savior we present, in our own translation, punctuation, and paraphrase, as best may represent the native sense of the original.

And he said unto them, Agonize ye to enter by the narrow door while it is open and when ye can; *since many, I assure you, shall seek to enter* when it will be for ever too late; *and* then *they shall be utterly unable, from what instant the master of the house shall have arisen* suddenly to judgment *and closed the door, and ye shall have begun to stand without* in eternity, the scene having shifted as in the twinkling of an eye at death, *and to knock* with consternation and violence *at the door, saying, 'O Lord! O Lord! open to us!' And he shall answer and say to you, 'I know you not whence ye are.' Then shall ye begin to say, 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.' But he shall say, 'I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.' In that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, but you* yourselves *rejected without. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.*

And observe! there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last.

In the common version, unhappily the word *gate* seems not at all identical with *door* in the next verse, if indeed—so disparted by false punctuation too—there is expressed any relation or allusion at all. But, translating from the correct text of Griesbach and others, we reject πυλη, *gate*, and render it θυρα, *door*, in both places. The allusion is mutual, and the thing identical. *Enter the narrow door*, while it is open; for *when the master of the house shall have arisen, and shut the door*, then *ye shall be utterly unable, from that* instant of time; however anxious and however importunate may be your efforts of desperation, to effect an entrance.

In this view it is plain that the whole is natural, symmetrical, correct. The door is open while life lasts; and this by the sovereign forbearance and clemency of *the master of the house.* When however HE pleases to rise up and shut it, suddenly or otherwise, by death, the scene is changed instantly, from time to eternity; from an abused probation to an undone retribution. The signs and forms

and congruities of one continuity of thought and speech, are obvious in the original. Let any scholar read it naturally and attentively, uncaring of the ill-judged punctuation, and he will see the truth and the nature of the whole, as a unit of awful and instructive harmonies.

The answer of Christ consists generally of two parts;

I. The practical and solemn exhortation, *Agonize ye to enter by the narrow door;* and

II. The considerations and reasons that enforce it; such as—

1. 'Many' will perish through neglect of it.

2. They will not neglect it hereafter, when they first find themselves undone—and full of anguish!

3. This change occurs immediately at death.

4. The event of death is determined by the sovereign pleasure and providence of *the only wise God our Savior*, who is *the master of the house* of mercy.

5. The outcry of desperation, when consciousness first awakes in an undone eternity,

will be terrible, importunate, and horribly agonizing, as well as intensely great and earnest.

6. It will all be in vain; they will knock, and pray, and exclaim, and beseech, and repeat, and persist in their awful extremity; and Christ will only answer, *I know you not; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.*

7. Consciousnesss, identifying and personal, will be perfect in eternity, even more luminously than it ever is in time. A man will know that it is himself that is there!

8. Stoicism and indifference are all madness, all affectation; proceeding from ignorance, insensibility, and unbelief. There will be none of it hereafter. Neither men nor devils can bear *the wrath of the Lamb.* Let a sinner only perceive a very little of his real state, and it will cause his tranquility to explode. His heart would fail, his *knees* to *smite together* like Belshazzar's, and he would instantly be seen either agonizing in despair, or—agonizing to *enter by the narrow door* of the kingdom.

In this, the scenes of eternity are purposely brought to enforce the grand duty of time.

And so reluctant and dilatory are men, so indisposed to perform that duty, and so deceitfully given to evade and to postpone it, that it requires such plain dealing hopefully to break the enchantment and reduce them to themselves. Here the curtain is lifted by the Lord himself; and men are permitted to see for themselves, a universe of interests and an eternity of motives, all bearing, with mighty concentration and effect on the immediate and energetic performance of the duty—of effecting *an entrance*, while they can, by *the narrow door*.

Let any candid man of equal intelligence comprehend the matter, and then say, if there is anything to be compared, especially in the present instance, with the native sense of the oracles of God. The vulgar view, is not the native sense; and because it contains some general truth of importance, though it is no proper interpretation at all, it passes current with hundreds even of the ministers of the gospel—who will continue to prefer it, too many of them, probably, even after they are better informed—as if there were no distinction between truth in general and truth in special, none between truth in some other place and

truth in this place, none between sound abstract theology and a correct investigation of the mind of the Spirit in a particular and very important passage of his own inspiration. In our view, the sense divine is always just infinitely, just eternally, better than the gloss human; and to evolve that sense, here and elsewhere, and let the people see and feel it, is better than a thousand sermons of other excellence or of grand applause, in which the text is not truly, purely, and fully expounded. This is the appropriate business of an educated and a competent ministry. But O how rarely is it done! how lamentably are other things called orthodox and this neglected! How often are flashy and fustian eloquence, studied taste, and false ornament, put in the place of the genuine *truth and soberness* of the Word of God! How often are the very graces of gesture, voice, and manner, made to take the precedency.

> Now this is fulsome! and offends me more,
> Than in a preacher slovenly attire
> And rustic coarseness would!

But when will the ministry and the people altogether appreciate the truth of God? O

when shall the world be flooded with his salvation?

That many commence religion, or seek in their own way to obtain it, and fail, because they seek it languidly or otherwise, in a wrong manner, is a solemn and very important truth; but it is not the truth or the meaning here! Christ is not laying down what has been called the 'law of failure' in the present world, as if seeking were intrinsically imcompetent, and as if *agonizing* were all. The seeking, to which HE here refers, is not in time, but eternity. It is after death. It is desperate and bootless; though alas! it is perfectly natural in such awful circumstances. It is expressed definitely in the future form; not they seek: but they *shall seek:* not they are unable, but *they shall not be able, when once the door is shut!*

Seeking is a great duty, which nothing ought to be suffered to disparage and to which rich promises are made. *Seek and ye shall find. Every one that seeketh findeth. He that cometh to God must believe* two things, both equally true, equally necessary;

That he is; and

That he is the rewarder of them that seek him.

Hence to array the idea of *seeking* God in the present life, as vapid and worthless, against that of *agonizing* as antithetically all, is wrong every way; and surely it fails in that for which it has been so often ingeniously, or at least elaborately, prepared: it does not suit the text, it is poor interpretation, it leads us away from the sense.

We have retained the word *agonize* in our version, simply, 1. because it is so often preferred; 2. because it is like the original, from which it is a mere transfer; 3. because it expresses energy, vigor, and as it were, athletic effort, with due determination and action, so as to succeed. But *agonize* in English implies pain, if not torture, and is hence exceptionable. The original is not so. The efforts of a wrestler, not the anguish of a victim, is the whole meaning of the order; *Agonize ye to enter by the narrow door.*

We conclude with some observations on the passage, as to its doctrine and scope.

1. The difficulties, which we find in religion are *mainly those of our own making*; *they re-*

sult from ourselves. They are all relative, not intrinsical. The way is plain. The door is open. God invites us. The Spirit is ready, and saith, come. God is sincere, infinitely and eternally sincere, the sincerest being in the universe! But—we are proud, and we dislike to be sane, recovering from that madness to the wisdom of humility. We are vain and frivolous; and we must become sober and sensible: we must learn and love to think. We are indolent and presumptuous; and God requires action, decision, promptitude, in his service. We decline for the present; intending on some indefinite 'to-morrow' to consider the matter. We have indulged these and other bad habits so long, that now we say, how can I reform? Hence the difficulties result from ourselves. They are not in the gospel of God, but in the voluntary stupidity of man. They are all subjective, not objective. God is not at all to blame for them; but man is, and except one repents of them he must perish.

2. There are *peculiar difficulties in the first stages* of piety, in the commencement of religion. *Agonize ye* TO ENTER *by the narrow*

door. Some of the sternest difficulties, relatively such, that ever lie in the way of the Christian pilgrim, lie at the threshold and are found at starting. How can he give up the world as his chief good—when he knows, that, as such, it is no good at all, but only delusion, perfidy, destruction! How can he choose God in Christ Jesus as his better part, his eternal portion, when he is guilty in the sight of God, and the very thought of God is solemnly revolting or cordially ungrateful to him! God indeed is excellent, glorious, all-perfect, infinitely blessed; and all this, both intrinsically and relatively, in himself and to us. But he has not been used to think thus of God. His habits are his enemies; and they are so set, and fixed, and formidable, within him, that *how to perform that which is good, he finds not.* Here is conflict. Beside, he sees many lions in the way. How will he appear, after conversion, to his former companions in madness? What will they think of him? What will they all say? How can he endure their looks, their sneers, their calumnies? And how does he know that religion is a practicable thing for him, or

that he shall hold on and hold out, should he begin? Were it not better never to begin, than fail and be eventually unable to finish, so great an enterprise? How hard is it to give up all for Christ, or be forever *unworthy of him!*

Such or similar are some of the many besetments and hindrances which molest a poor sinner at starting, or at the thought of becoming a Christian. He *counts the cost* imperfectly, and all on one side. He is not so impartial and large-minded, as to weight the subject, calmly and wisely, in the scales of truth. 'How much will it cost me to be a Christian,' he inquires. And if he urges the question directly and to some extent he often hesitates the more, as if he cannot afford it! But how seldom does he calculate *the infinitely greater cost of* NOT *becoming a Christian!* the infinite comparative cheapness of genuine piety! When he sees this distinctly, acquiesces in its truth, and approves it, all the levities of the other side appear to him, as they are, justly contemptible. He despises them, and despises himself for the unmanly cowardice that could entertain them for a

moment! He makes the necessary decisions, efforts, sacrifices! He loses nothing, but is an infinite gainer. He *enters by the narrow door*, and succeeds in his *agonizing* of initiation. He is the freeman of Jesus Christ. He is a new creature. For the first time in his life, the internal war of elements subsides. His heart and his conscience move together with his understanding, and all in the ways and channels of the truth. Thus it is that the Spirit of God leads him, illumines him, elevates, refines, and enfranchises him. He is *justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* The process of sanctification is genuinely begun; he has experienced regeneration by the Spirit of God; and his difficulties vanish. Piety is pleasure, duty is delight, obedience is preference, service is freedom, self-denial is profit; and *godliness is great gain.* The lions he imagined in the way, are found to have been all in his own morbid imagination. As soon as he walks up to them, they are not there. Phantoms have no substance. Realities now affect him. He sees them, and feels them, by faith in what his Savior tells him.

He is *made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* He is a conqueror, conquest is now his business, his occupation. He has passed the Rubicon, the perilous crisis, the awful threshold, the narrow door. He may find difficulties afterward. But he expects them, he can vanquish them; they are not so terrifying, so tremendous, as those he found at the entrance. He has learned with Paul to say *I can do all things, through Jesus Christ who strengtheneth me.*

3. *The* TWO KINDS OF INABILITY *have here their illustration.* Now men cannot enter, because the choose to omit it. The *door* is open by order of *the master of the house.* It is not he that prevents them. On the contrary, he opens the door, at great expense of benevolence, and at the cost of the blood of his own life; and he beseeches, as well as invites them, to enter. *And they* WILL NOT *come to him that they might have life.* This *will not* is their inability. It makes their *cannot.* Why do they not enter? Who hinders them? They hinder themselves. What a mountain interposed is that will! They make their own inability—which is

nothing but voluntary disinclination. It is this obstacle that the Spirit of God removes in regeneration; which is a moral change, as in it the temper and prevailing preference of the man are changed. Now he desires God, his truth, his ways; and now he subordinates the world to his supreme good.

But hereafter we see plainly there will be an inability of another sort. *Many shall seek and shall not be able*? Why? Answer—Because the door is shut by Omnipotence, and men are *not able* to open it. Had they the will never so much, it would not be the power. They are eternally unable to enter; a proper, perfect inability.

These two kinds are marvellously different in nature; and they are grand realities to be contemplated in the objective of all piety. We must make a distinction where God has made a difference; or, never see things as they are to be seen. The distinction applies to all voluntary beings. It is simple, real, eternal. It wonderfully illumines the moral system of God. It is just as valid as that identical distinction, made commonly by divines, between the natural and the moral perfections of God; or, those which define him

great and those which define him good. It is a distinction which all men believe; acting on it, judging by it, understanding it, every where—till it is brought to elucidate the moral empire of God, to prove the accountableness of man, and to fix the inexcusableness of the ungodly! Then they cannot understand it. They doubt its truth, or its relevancy, or its use. They are *unable* to understand it. They have lost all their ability to see their own blame-worthiness! How can a man own his sin, when he is proud? How attend to religion, when he prefers worldly pleasure?

4. *We see* THAT NOW MEN ARE ABLE *to enter by the narrow door.* If it be asked, In what sense? we reply, in common sense, and proper sense, they are able: because they have all the requisite faculties, they have all the facilities and means, and they have the opportunity, as well as the invitation and the command of God, *to enter while there's room* and while the door is open. They are then properly *able*, whether disposed and willing or not; and whether finally saved or lost, they are now able. They are able in that very sense in which they *shall not be able when once the master of the house*

hath risen up and hath shut to the door. The Spirit gives no new faculties in regeneration. He influences men *to enter by the narrow door*, by means of their own agency, subsidized to Christ, and now applied in the way of duty, as it was before perverted in the way of sin. He influences them through the truth, by appropriate means, and in accordance with the laws of mind. Their accountability is not at all violated. It is rather exercised, displayed, and glorified, in it all.

5. They will be wholly and eternally *unable* in the world to come, as they are not unable here. This the Savior shows us, most graphically in his whole answer. The inability that can and will not, as distinguished from that which will and cannot, is here exceedingly intelligible. They are called, the one improper and the other proper; or, the moral and the natural; or, the ethical and the physical; or that which exists independently of our will and in defiance of our powers, and that which consists with our powers and is constituted wholly by our will or our own voluntary inclination; or, that in which we are passive, it being made for us by a power extraneous and superior, and that in which

we are active, it being made, accountably, by ourselves, in the voluntary exercise of our own powers. It is a pity that Christians, and some divines even, *cannot* discern the difference on which this distinction rests! Have they no capacity, of seeing truth, of following evidence, of understanding things? or is it because they make their own inability by their obstinacy, their will? If so, we must testify the truth, *whether they hear or whether they forbear!* We blest God, for ourselves, that, with no miraculous dotation, we can discern the difference, and see the basis on which the distinction rests! And who could not see it, that is neither an idiot, nor insane, nor asleep, nor intoxicated, nor a *hater of the light!*

6. How GREAT IS THE MADNESS, that men in their senses, capable of reflection, and rationally convinced of the truth, with an open door of salvation before them, *which no man can shut*, should dally, hesitate, and trifle, with all their eternal interests, with all the moral glory of the slighted God, and actually perish forever—just because they make no proper effort to be saved!

7. How will they be *suddenly and forever confounded* when once *the master of the house*

has risen up and shut to the door at death, and they begin to find themselves in eternity ——— lost!

8. How ought that audacious lie, Universalism, to be *ashamed and abolished forever.* Here the Savior and the Judge and the Prophet of the church, lifts the curtain, shows us a scene in the other world, and there are *many seeking* in vain to enter when it is forever too late! If a man chooses to disbelieve all this divine testimony, and all that in other places throughout the Holy Scriptures, he may wait—if he dares, for what shall convince him of the fire, at last—he may wait for personal experience! *whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not and their damnation slumbereth not.*

9. How is *Unitarianism* in like manner exploded! Behold the Son of God opening and shutting at his pleasure the door of hope! answering, as the Most Holy Judge Eternal, the unavailing outcries of the reprobate! Compare Mat. 7:23. *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* And is he a mere man, or a mere creature of any larger dimensions? Let 'the sons of reason' affirm the

delusion, if they choose. They will cease that madness in eternity, if not in time.

10. Though the difficulties of religion, especially in its initial stages, are relative and not intrinsic, are all of our own making, and not organized or created by the nature of the gospel, yet *are they real difficulties*, which it requires effort, and something like *agony*, to overcome. Men are not to float or drift into heaven, like trees by a freshet borne into a city that stands on the margin of a river. The church is not like a steamer, into which if one gets, he may expect safely to sail into port, asleep or awake, drunk or sober, active or indolent. Nor is there any tide of destiny or decrees inconsistent with the mandates and the duties here prescribed. *No lie is of the truth;* and the ways of God are all consistent, harmonious, true, from everlasting ages.

We are not of them who reduce or dilute the truths of God; much as we desire to see the truth represented as it is, with the purity of an apostle, the simplicity of a master, and the suitableness of costume and illustration, which the age and the intelligent reading public require. We have no communion

with those, as such, who in any way endeavor plausibly to misrepresent the practical nature of piety; especially with those who depicture THE WAY OF LIFE to be not *narrow* but *broad*, reversing the figures and the facts of our Savior's statements. This may be done by views of the surface, partial and peurile; by doctrine, specious and unfounded; by the parade of outward and unintelligent devotion; by the taking fallacies of antinomianism; by formality, ritualism, self-righteousness, Arminianism, or any other flesh-pleasing invention. Some preachers show such a wonderful facility of entrance, as to exclude all serious effort, to say nothing of wrestling in prayer or *agonizing*. They seem to imply that very worldlings might naturally dance or stagger into the kingdom under *their* administrations, as they drift with the multitude of fashion, or run with their frivolous comrades of mirth, *in the course of this world;* making in effect nothing of regeneration, nothing of substantial piety, nothing of *the true sayings of God;* but making ALL of their own paltry party and their own idolized canonical forms. There is a leaven of this, increasingly operative in our general community of late. But

it must be boldly resisted by the friends of God. It is popery—none the safer, or the less noxious, for wearing the mask of protestantism. It operates as poison to the soul, deluding men. It vitiates fundamentally the revealed doctrine of regeneration—as if this could be without a change of heart! And it magnifies the popish and thrice stupid error of 'the church;' as it were their sole object to restore to us the dark ages, in which that false conception, down to the present day, has had an immense influence in making the darkness that may yet be seen and felt. It consists of three parts—every one of them pestiferous and false; 1. That there is no difference, or none of importance, between the church visible and the church invisible; the distinction being useless or illusory. 2. That the proper attributes of the invisible are to be predicated of the visible church; as that out of it there is no salvation, its unity, its perpetuity, God's gracious presence there, his mercy in it, and with it, forever. 3. That the visible church is identified with their own denomination, which is exclusively 'the church;' as all other denominations—they never say 'churches' in this relation—are

outcast from 'the church,' and are abandoned to 'the uncovenanted mercies' of God. This tri-form monster is wholly anti-scriptural; and we believe, in its origin and its deserts, infernal! We think it wholly superfluous here to advance one proof, since the statement proves itself. On any proper occasion, we are *semper paratus*, with the word of God, against this deleterious falsehood. We know mainly of no greater or more important distinction than that between the church visible and the church invisible. *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;* that is, with all the invisible church! The error must be resisted even unto blood; we would rather die than patronize it. But it is more to our purpose here to say that it makes men so *at ease in Zion*, that many of them have no *agony* in entering or occupying, the visible church; since they never care to enter the *terra incognita* of the church invisible. Many a *foolish virgin* has a *lamp*, and that is all!

Hence we see the deep folly and blindness of those preachers and those sects, who are wont so to smooth the way in their representations as to imply, that, with them, and under the 'authority' of their faction of 'the

church,' it is all easy and clear, all stereotyped in order, all rail-road facilities and transportation—only join them! But it is one thing to win a poor fool of a partisan, and quite another in God's way to make a Christian. Men have many ways of religionizing, and a grand desideratum it is with honorable millions, to find 'a religion fit for gentlemen,' or a way 'by authority,' that is a great deal easier and better than the primeval old way of God. Baptism is very equivocal—regeneration! How to be saved and yet never *obey the gospel;* how reasonably and credibly,

'To reconcile one's sins with saving grace;'

this is the inexorable difficulty.

11. The popular idea that 'while there is life there is hope,' seems in an important sense to be sustained by the whole moral drift of our Savior's answer. Its symmetrical and analogical sense is that death supervening *shuts the door*, and excludes hope, in the case of the reprobate; consequently, there is hope previously, because the door is open. To be sure, this is objective hope; and there is never humanly any subjective hope for a sinner, until it is made by regeneration;

which is Christ in you the hope of glory. But in the sense and the proportions of the passage, it appears clear that Watts is right when he says;

> And while the lamp holds out to burn
> The vilest sinner may return.

Certainly, he may. The door is open; and he is obligated to *count the long-suffering of God to be salvation;* and so to enter and be saved, as God still invites and commands him. If he is prevented, it is not God that prevents him. If straitened, he is *not straitened in us, but in his own bowels.* If blinded, it is his own voluntarily indulged pride, and self-righteousness, and ungodly habits, by which *the things that belong to his peace are hidden from his eyes.* The way is plain before him; the door is open; he is on probationary ground! *The Spirit and the Bride say, Come;* the blood of Christ has lost none of its efficacy; the mercy of God is infinitely rich; the thing is not impossible, neither in itself, nor to the resources of Omnipotence; his duty is unchangeable; and he is in no sense *unable,* as he will be unable, *when once the master of the house has risen up and hath shut to the door.*

Even 'the unpardonable sin,' as it is humanly and technically called, is not so called in the Word of God. It is there described historically alone; as that which, as a matter of fact, *hath never forgiveness*. It may be pardonable, and yet never pardoned. It may be related one way to the sufficiency of essential or provisional mercy, and quite another way to the eventuation of things. Whatever we may say or think about the most hardened reprobate on earth, we must own, that, when the tables are turned against him in eternity, he is then consummately undone, *unable*, lost, as he never was before, in this world; where, as *a prisoner of hope*, salvation was practicable to him, as it never will be again, and as it never was to a prisoner of despair. We only add, that, it is very dificult and even dangerous for us to determine, in any given case, that the party is utterly abandoned of his God and that he will never be converted. We ought to 'hope on and hope ever,' while we can; to err rather on the side of hope, than on that of despair; and to remember that thousands have been utterly given up of man, who were not abandoned of

God, as their subsequent salvation will eternally demonstrate to the glory of God.

12. The popular idea of death-bed terrors, so awful, so awakening, and so propitious to a desperate conversion in the final hour, is wholly excluded and condemned by the passage before us; as it is condemned by the whole tenor of Scripture and the whole testimony of experience. Scan the passage. Measure its architecture. Weigh its proportions, relations, and principles. The terror comes only in eternity, only when the door is shut, only when they stand without and exclaim in the anguish of despair. Men ordinarily die just as they live; and they first live in the Lord, if they *die in the Lord* and are *blessed*. Ordinarily men, who live fools, die fools, in spite of Dr. Young's prophecy and poetry.

> Ye deaf to truth! peruse this parson'd page
> And trust for once a prophet and a priest—
> 'Men may live fools but fools they cannot die.'

The thief on the cross is a prodigy, a rare exception; in circumstances that will never be repeated—as the Savior dies no more. 'There is one such instance, on record, that none might despair; and but one, that none might presume.'

Besides, terror and consternation are not propitious to piety, if they come. Convulsion, paroxysm, phrensy, are opposed to sober piety, and not at all desirable. Still, if it were not so, they are remedies that ordinarily are not found. The wicked die the death of fools. *There are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm.* This means not their physical 'strength'; for that declines. Otherwise, they would never die at all. It means therefore, the moral strength of their delusion, their blindness, their false hope, their ominous serenity, and their state as incorrigible, as abandoned, and as soon to be changed, to their eternal confusion.

13. One final thought is plain—Every man MUST personally agonize to enter the kingdom of mercy; that is, he must do it absolutely, he shall do it infallibly, the necessity to do it is universal and inexorable. The only question is—where, when, and with what hope, will he do it? He must agonize in time or in eternity; with effort and decision, or with phrensy and desperation; with 'high endeavor and with glad success,' or with the outcry of the lost and the horrible energy and wailing of the finally reprobate. He must

agonize comparatively without pain or absolutely with pain; comfortably with hope or miserably without hope! Yea, and he MUST seek with prayer, for an entrance—either where prayer can be heard or where it cannot be heard; where Jesus can answer in mercy or where he must answer in judgment; where he says, *I will receive you*, or where he says, *I never knew you; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* Every man seeks an entrance, either here while the door is open, or hereafter, when it is shut! And how affecting to compare the earnestness of the efforts and the entreaties of despair, with the listlessness and the negligence of any exertions ordinarily made—it seems—in this world of hope! O who will yet discredit *the truth as it is in Jesus*, and hazard all on the forlorn hope of some indefinable rescue at last, while he *neglects so great salvation* now? Eternity, salvation, perdition, the word of God, these are too much for us to trifle with them. Said one arrested worldling to another, 'If there is any truth in religion, this is a desperate game at which you and I are playing!' The Spirit of the living God had made that new impression in his soul; and

its expression, in such terms of forcible truth, was the natural consequence.

Reader, take your election—Will you seek now or hereafter? Will you make the agony of effort when it can avail you, or the agony of anguish when it will be worse than vain? Will you pray now, when the Savior can hear you, or hereafter when he will be inexorable? Which will you prefer, prosperity or defeat, in so great a concern? Seek, pray, agonize, you must. O the difference, of attempting it in a world of mercy or in a world of wrath! Here is hope, encouragement, probation; there is despair, madness, retribution! Which alternative shall be yours? That of the saved or the lost? Under God, it depends on yourself to decide. He appeals to you, and waits for you, to decide. He is patient indeed; but there is no neutrality no indecision with him. He is urging you, persuading you, commanding you, to do what is now practicable. It is not in your ruin that he takes *any pleasure at all.* So he hath sworn, as well as spoken, and by his actions shown. He is infinitely benevolent, and eternally sincere. True, he can make you useful to the universe in your

destruction; and he will, he must, do it, if you turn not to him. But he infinitely prefers your salvation. His philanthropy is infinite and eternal. It would gratify his perfect nature, and glorify his boundless benevolence, to save you. Not all the angels in heaven would rejoice at your conversion one millionth part as much as God. But he can do no contradiction, no absurdity, no moral wrong, no falsification of his own truth. He cannot ruin the universe to save you. He cannot save you in sin, or without your own consent, your own exercised repentance, your own direct efforts to enter, while you may, *the strait gate* of his kingdom. Will you be his friend, or his enemy, forever? *As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead*, BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD.

A WORD TO SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHERS

Before the volume closes, we would subjoin a few remarks on the utility of especial care, and prayer, and system, in reading the Bible. The loose and desultory way is known, not by its fruits, but by its fruitlessness, to be

condemned as unworthy of regard. And what we here append is designed peculiarly for teachers in Sabbath Schools.

These have an office of uncomputed influence and efficiency in the formation of religious character. Millions are moulded by them before they are mature, before they can judge for themselves, and before they come under the higher, and the more distant, instructions of the Christian pastor. How important that the teachers should be taught! that those who impart instruction and originate impressions in religion, should be themselves sound in the faith, replete with wisdom, habituated to the rules of discipline, and always able to *render a reason*, and that a good one, for all that they inculcate, as monitors and ushers in the school of Christ! The church has too often derived detriment here, where she looked only for advantage. Teachers have sometimes mistaken grossly the truth, inculcated their own errors and ignorances instead of it, and so communicated mischief, in place of benefit, to the confiding youthful circle that waited around such an unworthy centre. We will not accuse one of them in general, though such unworthy instances

have sometimes occurred, of a design to use their station and their office to teach strange doctrine or propagate sentiments condemned by the church to which they belong—though this, we repeat it, has been done, with clandestine and infamous address, in some certain cases! We suppose them all honest. We thank them for their excellent auxiliary services. We appreciate their self-denial. We know that some of the most useful, and the most assiduous, and the most deserving, of them, are sometimes utterly discredited, utterly unthanked, as well as unrewarded, for their faithfulness and their toil. We wish them at least to secure a full reward in heaven; in order to this we take the liberty to remind them of a few things. Will they receive the freedom from a friend?

1. *They ought religiously to ponder and appreciate the nature and the responsibleness of their charge.* Within a sphere of limited dimensions they are pastors, that is, teachers of the truth. They are forming the minds of young immortals. Each one of them has a congregation of dependent souls. What a solemn and weighty business do they transact! How eternal its consequences, how

divinely excellent its aims, and properly how rich and how eternal are its rewards!

2. *They ought to prepare for their work*, and that habitually, and conscientiously, and always, before attempting its performance. They ought to study the lesson themselves—not merely read, but study it! This they might do with pleasure and profit to themselves, infinitely outweighing all the care, and the cost, and the self-denial, required. It would soon become easy, natural, interesting, by habituation. They would feed themselves as well as others. They would grow in all divine excellences. It would improve and enrich their minds. They would get more than they give, and retain more than they dispense, continually improving. And thus with more confidence and propriety could they pray for the divine blessing on all that they teach and on all that they do.

3. As one important part of preparation we say KEEP *a good and durable* BIBLE COMMONPLACE BOOK, and enter in it any select passage of scripture, with your own sober and maturest thoughts, making and recording there all those reflections on its meaning, its use, its connection, its grammar, its implication, and its his-

tory, which may incidentally and at the time occur to you—dating every entry, and paging every leaf, for better re-perusal and distinction and reference. Suppose you insert one text only a week, which you have yourself found and analyzed, or which some good preacher has well explained, or which some of your class have mistaken or misquoted, or which you especially wish to remember, or which some author has brought to your view. Put down your best impressions at the time—or they may leave you forever. This book would soon become a precious treasure to you. In this way then you have fifty-two select passages in a year—with a commentary. You will have more next year. Your mind is benefited. You will teach better in the school, and learn better in the church, and pray better in the closet. The mental discipline of such a process will be practically great. For, if conversation makes a ready man, and thinking a profound one, if reading makes a full man, prayer a devout man, and writing a correct one, as Lord Bacon somewhere saith, you could blend all these as a Sabbath School teacher, in the way we here commend. Your pastors will love to aid you

occasionally as you may need it; and, *remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God even our Father*, they will greet and love you as fellow-helpers in the work of the gospel and powerful auxiliaries to their own ministry.

Nor should you be discouraged at first from a sense of your own inaptitude. All beginnings, said the late Doctor Mason, are awkward. Your efforts would grow more and more easy. You would get tact and facility by practice and perseverance. Soon your proficiency would be felt and seen. One such experimental, disciplined, intelligent teacher, is worth more than a host of drivelers and spiritual pedants—however honest, however sincere. The benefits would be countless and incalculable. We should all become biblical Christians. Our youth would mature under a forming influence of the best description. They would be wise in the things of God; and neither infidelity, nor popery, nor puseyism, nor the mountebank schemers of the end of the world—particularly April 1, 1843—could shake their constancy, or mar their peace, or impede their usefulness or their salvation.

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